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THE

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND VIRTUES

CONSIDERED IN THE RELIGIOUS STATE.

BY

MGR. CHARLES GAY,

COADJUTOR TO THE BISHOP OF POICTIERS.

"Omnia et in omnibus Christus."—St. Paul.

Translated from the Sixth French Edition, by the special permission of the Author,

BY

THE RIGHT REV. ABBOT BURDER,

Order of the Reformed Cistercians.

Vol. I.

LONDON: BURNS & OATES.
1878.

141. i. 412.

A Work approved by His Lordship the Bishop of Poictiers, and recommended by the Archbishops of Malines, of Tours, of Perga (Coadjutor of his Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop of Bordeaux), and the Bishops of Tulle, of Mende, of Saint-Claude, of Angers, of Autun, of Moulins, and of Hebron (Vicar-Apostolic of Geneva).

LONDON: PRINTED BY JOHN S. LEVEY, WEST HARDING STREET, E.C.

ERRATA.

In the second page of the Brief of our late Holy Father, line 2, *for* "dearly," *read* "clearly."

At page xxiv., line 17, there should be no comma after "Alexander."

page xxvii., in the first line, the word "Editors" should be "Publishers."

page xxxi., line 18, *for* "their," *read* "its."

page xli., line 6, *for* "by the Brief," *read* "alluded to in the Brief."

page 9, line 3, *for* "brute," *read* "animal."

page 13, line 4, *for* "which can produce this moderate knowledge," *read* "which this moderate knowledge can produce."

page 15, line 10, *for* "indefinitively," *read* "indefinitely."

page 25, line 3, *for* "In truth" says St. Paul (He is the), *read* In truth, says St. Paul, "He is the," &c.

page 137, 9th line from bottom, *for* "in the sacrifices," *read* "at the sacrifices."

page 138, line 2, *for* "was preserved," *read* "were preserved."

page 175, 15th line from bottom, *for* "and of enabling," *read* "of enabling."

page 216, 10th line from bottom, *for* "an immense hunger to be swallowed up," *read* "an immense desire to be swallowed up."

page 260, line 14, *for* "peace," *read* "grace."

page 305, line 13, *after* "exist," insert a comma.

page 312, line 17, *for* "Light," *read* "Lights."

page 318, 3rd line from bottom, insert a comma after "all."

page 327, 14th line from bottom, "But in discovering," here begin a fresh paragraph.

page 340, line 17, *for* "insert them into," *read* "put them into."

page 340, 2nd line from bottom, insert a comma after "nothing."

page 345, 11th line from bottom, *for* "the lust of men, and the outcast of the people," *read* "despised, and the most abject of men."

page 350, 9th line from bottom, *for* "objection," *read* "outcast."

page 370, 4th line from bottom, *for* "evoking," *read* "invoking.

BRIEF

OF THE

SOVEREIGN PONTIFF.

PIUS PP. IX.

Venerabilis Frater, salutem et apostolicam Benedictionem. Libenter à publicâ famâ didicimus, venerabilis Frater, acceptissimum omnibus contigisse, te, cujus doctrinæ soliditas, et ministerii operositas comperta erat, ad sacrarum infularum honores fuisse vocatum. Et sane egregia istæc de te notitia non continetur limitibus Pictaviensis diœcesis, ubi diù spectari potuerat utilissima, quam jamdiù adhibes, opera illustri et commendatissimo Pictaviensi Præsuli; sed multo latiùs prolata fuerat à scriptis tuis, complurium Episcoporum suffragiorum commendatis, eâque cupiditate expetitis à fidelibus, ut brevi novâ eguerint editione. Et meritò: nam in iis, quæ duobus voluminibus vulgaveras *De vitâ virtutibusque christianis*, licet in Regularium præsertim usum editis, sic sublimiores theologiæ doctrinas attemperaveras captui piorum cultorumque fidelium, ut accommodatum conditioni suæ ac jucundum pietatis pabulum ibi invenirent. Idemque posteà obtinuisti per documenta, quæ *matribus familias* è suggestu tradita, duobus pariter commisisti voluminibus. Illa siquidem monita, quæ ore prolata, Pictavienses matronas ad proprii officii nobilitatem gravitatemque agnoscendam adduxerant, et ad parandam Ecclesiæ patriæque sobolem verè christianam erudiverant et excitaverant, vulgata deinde typorum operâ, beneficium

PIUS IX., POPE.

Venerable Brother, Health and Apostolic Benediction.

We have heard with satisfaction, through common report, that everyone is pleased to see you called to the holy honours of the Episcopate. You were known and esteemed beforehand, Venerable Brother, for the solidity of your doctrine and the active labours of your ministry. This exalted reputation was not limited to the frontiers of the Diocese of Poictiers, which had long witnessed your constant co-operation with the worthy and illustrious Bishop of that See; but it has extended farther, through your writings, which, commended by the approval of several Bishops, have been so eagerly sought by the faithful, as to necessitate new editions without delay.

This eagerness was justified; for in the two volumes "On the Christian Life and Virtues," although especially destined for Religious, you have succeeded in placing the most sublime doctrines of theology within the reach of the pious and enlightened among the faithful, so that they might find therein wherewith to foster their piety suitable to their state.

You have equally succeeded in your instructions from the pulpit, addressed to the "Mothers of Families," which were subsequently collected in two volumes.

idem ad matres omnes porrexerunt. Quæ sane dum nos magnoperè recreant, qui lucubrationibus hujusmodi sollicitari videmus fideles et magnoperè delectari ; tibi gratulari nos cogunt, qui veritates catholicas, atque etiam sublimiores, eâ perspicuitate ac suavitate exponere valuisti, ut veri et efficaces fierent pietatis illices et fomites. Quocircà volumina nobis oblata pergrato excepimus animo ; et dum Deo gratias agimus de fructû jam ipsis concesso, eum semper pinguiorem et uberiorem iisdem ominamur, quo corona tua splendidior in cœlo fiat. Interim excipe Benedictionem apostolicam, quam superni favoris auspicem, et præcipuæ benevolentiæ nostræ testem tibi, Venerabilis Frater, peramanter impertimus.

Datum Romæ apud Sanctum Petrum die 13 Decembris anno 1877.

Pontificatûs nostri anno tricesimo secundo.

PIUS PP. IX.

These discourses, which you addressed to the Christian Mothers of Poictiers, brought them to recognise more clearly the importance and nobleness of their duties; at the same time they were instructed and incited to prepare truly Christian children for the Church and for their country.

By having those conferences printed and published, you have extended the blessing to all mothers.

It is a great consolation to us, that the faithful have a taste for such works, and read them with so much pleasure.

But this also compels us to congratulate you on having the secret of expounding Catholic doctrines, even of the most exalted kind, with so much clearness and in such a pleasing style, that they become a powerful attraction and a true focus of piety.

Therefore it is that we have received with a deep feeling of gratitude the volumes you have presented to us; and at the same time that we thank God for the fruit He has already caused your books to produce, we predict that they will produce still richer and more abundant fruit, so that your crown in heaven will be brighter.

In the meantime, accept the Apostolic Blessing which we send you, with most heartfelt affection, Venerable Brother, as a pledge of heavenly favour and a proof of our good wishes.

Given at Rome, at St. Peters, December 13th, 1877, and the 32nd Year of our Pontificate.

PIUS IX., POPE.

THE FOLLOWING NOTE REFERS TO THE LAST SENTENCE AT PAGE 8. THE NOTE WAS RECEIVED FROM THE AUTHOR TOO LATE TO BE INSERTED IN ITS PROPER PLACE. IT DOES NOT OCCUR IN THE EARLIER EDITIONS.

(*Translation.*)

It is clear that this is a mere hypothesis. The mineral, in fact, could not produce the acts of the vegetable life, without changing substantially its nature—that is to say, without ceasing to be what it is; and it would be the same with the vegetable, with regard to the acts of the animal life; as also with the animal as to any works of the intelligence. We make use of these comparisons simply to enable one to grasp the leading idea, that our elevation by grace to the supernatural order is the entry of our being into an entirely new order of life, and that we have only access to it by the fact of a real birth, the effect of a real generation, as the Scripture says. But (and here our comparisons are no longer applicable) our birth to the Divine life implies only for us, and in us, an accidental modification, reaching, it is true, to the very essence of our soul, but leaving it such as it is, in its nature and in its foundation: so that becoming a soul *deified*, it remains also a *human* soul. All this is elsewhere very clearly and concisely explained, in the course of this first treatise, and in different parts of our work. We insert this note in this place, only by pure precaution, being desirous to anticipate and to prevent those misunderstandings, which are as troublesome in theology as they are easy to fall into, by those who are not well instructed in that sacred science.

RECOMMENDATORY LETTER

OF

MGR. L'EVÊQUE DE POITIERS.

Monsieur l'Abbé,—

I have read the greater part of the series of treatises of which your two volumes are composed, on The Christian Life and Virtues considered in the Religious State.

Assuredly you have not laboured for yourself alone in providing, for the religious souls confided to your care, the delicious food of a doctrine so solid and so life-giving. The profit they have derived from it is clearly shown by the excellence and dignity of your language, which had become to them so accessible and familiar. For the most perfect eulogium that can be pronounced on an instruction so elevated and so perfect, is the very fact that it has created an audience capable of understanding and appreciating it. And because, according to the memorable maxim of St. Teresa, "In proportion as our Lord has many enemies and few friends, our task is to watch over these friends of His choice, that they may be good," I am discharging the debt of my pastoral office, as well as that of my grateful heart, by thanking you for all the blessings you have conferred on these souls, which are to me so dear. But both zeal and charity demand that the good which you have done should have a wider range, and that your labours should profit "all that seek the truth" (Eccles. xxiv. 47). How many are there who long and ask for greater perfection, but whose souls languish and wither away for want of the solid food of sound doctrine? Is it not time to leave the food which does not nourish? Does not wisdom cry

out, "All you that thirst come to the waters, and you that have no money make haste, buy and eat?" "Why do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which doth not satisfy you?" "Hearken diligently to me, and eat that which is good, and your soul shall be delighted in fatness" (Isaiah lv. 1, 2). Two Doctors of our Theological College having carefully examined these treatises as they came from the press, I do not hesitate to sanction their publication, which you will submit also to the judgment of the Holy See. I foretell the precious fruits which will attend this publication, and the sensible progress which will be made in the ways of that perfection, which befits not only the inmates of the cloister and the Priests of the Sanctuary, but all the Faithful who live in the world.

May our Lord, Monsieur l'Abbé, grant you the abundance of the graces He has promised to those who instruct others how to know and love Him.

✠ LOUIS EDWARD,
Evêque de Poitiers.

POITIERS, *le 6 Juillet*, 1874.
En l'Octave de SS. Apôtres Pierre et Paul.

EPISCOPAL LETTERS.

ARCHEVÊCHÉ DE MALINES. *Malines, 19 Juillet, 1874.*
St. Vincent de Paul.

Monsieur le Vicaire Général,—

I have been the more happy to receive your kind present, as I had not the pleasure of seeing you at Poitiers, as you were absent when I passed through it on my way to Lourdes.

I have had no difficulty in recognising, in the two volumes which you have had the goodness to send me, the thinker and the writer whose acquaintance I had formed at Rome during the Council. It was at the Belgian College, where we were assembled with the worthy successor of St. Hilary, and with his Lordship the Bishop of Paderborn, who is suffering still for the Faith. On reading what you have just published on the Christian Life and Virtues, I said to myself, here is practical and ascetic theology, such as it ought to be: it is the fruit of life on the tree of life, the Divine tree of dogmatic truth. Allow me to congratulate you: you have raised a monument. I shall take care to make your work known to the religious houses in my diocese, through their spiritual directors, who will find in it "the bread of the strong," and will know, at need, to draw from it also milk for the weak.

Have the goodness to accept, Monsieur le Vicaire Général, with my most grateful thanks, the expression of my most devoted attachment.

✠ V. A., Archev. de Malines.

ARCHEVÊCHÉ DE TOURS.

Tours, 15th January, 1874.

Monsieur et très-cher Abbé,—

If I am so long in thanking you for your book on the Christian Life and Virtues, accuse your book itself for my delay. You ask me to *look over* it, and to give you my opinion of it. Now, your book is not one to *look over*, or merely to turn over its leaves; it should be read carefully, meditated on, and deeply studied: it is *solid food*, and like the marrow of a lion, which must be tasted and relished in small quantities. In your two beautiful volumes you have put together a series of spiritual treatises, each of which, in my opinion, is a master-work, and forms a complete whole: while, at the same time, the parts are so linked together, each part with the rest, as to comprise, when all are united, a body of ascetic doctrine admirably fitted to conduct souls along the different pathways of the Christian Virtues, till they reach the highest points of perfection. Your treatise is not only exact, solid, profound, but exquisite, sweet, and elevated, and, moreover, gathered from the purest substance of the holy writings, and of theological teaching. On each point you have amassed, with as much exactitude and precision as order and clearness, all that the richest treasures of erudition and experience have been able to furnish, what is most fundamental and opportune. But what I value chiefly is the seal of practical utility, that you know how to impress on each one of your considerations. After having pointed out and elucidated, with irresistible logic and eloquence, the necessity and the beauties of a virtue, or of a point of perfection, you show immediately, and with the experience of a professor, the most efficacious means of acquiring and practising it. And in this, as in all the rest, you go direct to the first principle of things, and enter into most valuable details, perfectly adapted to the difference of individuals and their states. Such is the wisdom of your counsels as to the conscience and to direction that, in following them faithfully, we shall be sure not to turn aside, either to the right hand or to the left, but to walk always in that just way which conducts infallibly to the kingdom of God. Filled as you are with the spirit of St. Francis of Sales, of St.

Teresa, of the best theologians and ascetic authors, you know, by a just discernment, how to take each particular into consideration, to fortify the soul beforehand against illusions, scruples, discouragement, and sadness, and also against relaxation, dissipation, or the excess of confidence. On matters the most difficult and obscure you trace out a path easy, simple, straight, and luminous, the path of true love, as manifested in the sovereign Model, that of Jesus Christ our Lord.

How desirable it is that your work should be read, and read again, in order to comprehend it perfectly, that so your instructions might be applied to practice, in religious communities, by the ranks of the Clergy, and among persons self-styled pious, but who wish to become so seriously and in truth!

How much, by this frequent perusal, would the piety of all gain in solidity of support, in truth of sentiment, and in power of action! It is truly of your book that the demon may say, "I fear the man of one book." For my own part, I wish to make it a privileged book for my spiritual lecture.

Shall I stop to eulogise the beauties of the style? I find it equal to the solidity of the matter. There is nothing commonplace or incorrect in the expression, as there is none in the thought. Your work is written with that purity of taste, that exquisite delicacy and those graces of language, with which it is becoming to treat of the things of God and of Christian piety. To truths which are serious and sometimes severe, and to familiar beauties, you know how to impart, by the elevation and the dignity of your style, an unexpected charm and an additional fascination. Happy are the fervent communities that you have been able to raise to such heights of doctrine, and to accustom to this strong and substantial nutriment!

You have composed, Monsieur l'Abbé, a beautiful and a great work, which will give honour to your name and a glory to religion.

Pardon my delay, accept my warmest thanks and congratulations, and receive, I beg you, my affectionate regard.

✠ FELIX, Arch. de Tours.

Bordeaux, 23 *Novembre*, 1874.

My dear Friend,—

Permit an old acquaintance to tell you the great joy that I have had in reading your beautiful book. The more I had been initiated into your spirit, into your heart, into your studies, the more I have blessed your work, and the success it has achieved.

You have translated the most elevated doctrines of Catholic Theology into a language that pious souls can relish and comprehend, because true piety possesses the intelligence and the love of all that is great and Divine.

Whilst so many books are daily being published around us of an insipid and nauseous character, and so much talent is wasted in exalting the miseries and the shame of our poor fallen nature, you, with the light of faith, introduce us into a better world—a world too little known in the present day, which is, however, the true world—the supernatural world, the world of the grace of Jesus Christ, and of His Church.

You detail to us its incomparable marvels; and whether you speak simply of the Christian Life, or whether you ascend the heights of the Religious State, or treat of the Divine prerogatives of the Church, you show us always Jesus Christ and His grace regenerating souls, communicating to them life, strength, and beauty, and causing them to bud and to flourish, according to the word of Holy Writ: "Send forth flowers as the lily, and yield smell and bring forth leaves in grace" (Eccles. xxxix. 18).

If I am delighted with your book, its success gives me additional pleasure. It is, to my mind, considering what our poor age is, a good and an encouraging symptom. In spite of all that is done in the present day to degrade the intellect, I see that, when it becomes Christian, it recovers its relish for higher and nobler instructions. The good that you will do, my dear friend, is pure and unalloyed.

The more your book is liked, the greater will be the gain in the understanding of holy things.

Have I any need to add that I have read your beautiful work with an indescribable sympathy of thoughts and sentiments? These ideas and feelings were mine before; but you have suggested to me at each line their suitable expression, which had failed me.

Does not the communion of Christian friendship, in some measure, participate in the communion of Saints? Yes; there are the same thoughts, the same feelings, and, if not the same merit and the

same works, at least the same thanksgivings, when the work of a friend glorifies the Lord, and contributes to the salvation of souls.

It is for this reason, then, my dear friend, that with you I thank God for the grace He has granted you in permitting you to write these pages, which I have read with the greatest pleasure, and for which I congratulate you most sincerely.

Accept, my dear friend, this new and very sincere proof of my unalterable affection.

✠ FRANCOIS, Archev. de Perga,
Coadj. de Bordeaux.

ARCHEVÊCHÉ DE BOURGES.

Bourges, le 11 *Janvier*, 1875.

Monsieur l'Abbé,—

I have already become acquainted with your beautiful book of the Christian Life and Virtues. If I have not told you sooner what I thought of it, the reason is, that on account of your having received so many favourable opinions, and especially that of your illustrious Bishop, I thought that I might, without inconvenience, keep my own appreciation of it to myself; but since you are kind enough to ask my opinion, I will give it you in all simplicity.

In writing your work, your object and aim is to manifest throughout it Jesus Christ such as He is described in the Holy Scriptures, such as He appears in the world's history, in the instructions of Holy Church—that is to say, as the centre, the foundation, and the stay of all things, as the sum and the key of all mysteries, as the abridgment and the crowning accomplishment of all the designs of God in the world. You appear to me to have perfectly succeeded. In reading your last treatises, so full of light and of matter, the words of St. Paul—"instaurare omnia in Christo, quæ in cœlis, et quæ in terra sunt"—appear to us in a new light; they become palpable and thrilling; they burst forth from your pages like a heavenly constellation, illuminating and attracting.

It seems to me difficult for anyone who is faithful to grace not to comprehend you; it seems to me difficult, especially after having understood you, that he should not be brought nearer to that Divine ideal, which you set forth with so much energy and charm. He becomes earnest and joyous across the steep and rough mountain-

paths: you have opened the way for him; you have become for him the pioneer of God.

The success you have obtained already proves that, even in our age, sound and vivifying doctrines are relished by a considerable number. It is for yourself, Monsieur l'Abbé, a first reward; but the principal and the most enviable recompense to your priestly heart is to have been useful to souls. Thanks to you, many will aspire to the fulness of the perfect man. Many will go forward, and ascend from virtue to virtue, even till they come to the holy city; and, by the aid of those admirable ascensions that the grace of God disposes in the heart of those who seek Him, they will reach that heavenly Sion, where the God of gods will appear to them in His incomparable splendour.

I congratulate you, Monsieur l'Abbé, very sincerely on your book. I congratulate you on a master-work, which shall remain. I congratulate you especially on your book as a good work, which will benefit souls, and, by this means, will contribute powerfully to the glory of Him Whom you love, and of Whose love you have so largely sown the seed in your pages.

Accept, Monsieur l'Abbe, the assurance of my humble attachment in our Lord.

✠ C. A., Archevêque de Bourges.

Evêché de Tulle.

My very dear Charles,—

John Duns Scotus, the noble son of St. Francis, is represented, in his portrait, on his knees. He has before him a book open; on the page are these words, which he traced with his own hand at the beginning of one of his commentaries: "When there is question of celebrating the praises of Christ, if, because of my ignorance, I must fall into one extreme or the other, I would rather exceed than fall short"—"In commendando Christum, malo excedere, quam deficere in laude ipsi debitâ, si propter ignorantiam, in alterutrum oporteret incidere." Another book is open. It proclaims the Immaculate Conception of the B. V. Mary: "The glory of Scotus." A graceful form comes down from heaven. It is our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, under the appearance of a tender Infant. He caresses the great Theologian. He touches his lips. He writes

on them letters of gold. In another part of the picture the Blessed Virgin, her feet resting on a bright cloud, smiles on the great Doctor. She appears immaculate; a garland is unrolled, on which are written these words: "This is the glory of Scotus"—"Hæc est gloria Scoti." When I read your pages, so replete with learning, and so full of unction, my very dear Charles, it was my delight to imagine that you, also, piously, and on bended knees, had uttered noble protestations in honour of Christ and of His Blessed Mother. Oh! yes; your lips have been caressed by the Finger of the Word Incarnate, as were those of Scotus. Your pen has been gifted with words of inspiration, which you have happily expressed in your beautiful volumes. You have greatly and nobly contributed to the glory of Christ and of His Mother. I congratulate you, I thank you, my beloved Charles.

✠ J. B. P. LEONARD, Ev. de Tulle.

EVÊCHÉ DE MENDE.

Mende, le 31 *Juillet*, 1874.

Cher Monsieur l'Abbé,—

I have just read through your two volumes on the Christian Life and Virtues. In spite of serious employments, and the multiplicity of affairs, I have not been able to suspend my attention for a single instant before finishing the volumes—in spite of all. It is the most beautiful work of piety that has been written in this century. I congratulate you sincerely, Monsieur l'Abbé, on having rendered this great service to the Church.

Your different treatises are so conscientiously studied, so clearly unfolded, so full of doctrine, that, after their perusal, I have felt my soul strengthened, and my mind completely satisfied. I think that no Priests can read them without instruction and profit; or any Religious without an increase of piety; or any secular persons without astonishment at the beauty of your conceptions, or without admiration of the magnificence of the Christian Life. I recommend your work to those who are about me, to all those who have any anxiety for the good of souls, or the love of Jesus our Lord. "It enriches the Church, preserves the faith, destroys heresies, chases away vice, teaches good morals, and helps the growth of virtue."—

"Ecclesiam ditat, fidem conservat, hæreses destruit, mores instruit, et dat incrementa virtutibus."—Hugo. Card. de Laude Script. c. i.

Accept, my dear Monsieur l'Abbé, my most tender affection in Christ our Lord.

✠ FREDERICK, Ev. de. Mende.

EVÊCHÉ D'ANGERS.

Angers, 5 *Septembre* 1874.

Cher Monsieur l'Abbé,—

I am very slow in replying to the kind attention you have shown me in sending me your beautiful work on "The Christian Life and Virtues;" but your book is not one on which to cast a mere glance. I have made it a duty to read it entirely through, and to read with great attention some parts of it, reserving the rest for a more careful study, when I have time.

I will not any longer delay in expressing to you the great satisfaction which the reading of your work has caused me.

It seems to me to be the best work which has been written during this century. Well! here, at least, we have solid doctrine, and, moreover, expressed in admirable diction. I shall not fail to recommend it to religious communities, but especially to Priests. People of the world may also greatly profit by it; but how can we get them to read anything but newspapers and pamphlets?

Accept, cher Monsieur l'Abbé, with my thanks and felicitations, the assurance of my affectionate and very devoted regards.

✠ CH. EMILE,
Ev. d'Angers.

EVÊCHÉ DE ST. CLAUDE.

St. Claude, le 10 *Septembre*, 1874.

Monsieur le Vicaire Général,—

The more society is agitated, and the more it manifests an unsatiable activity in the pursuit of its own temporal well-being and its material interests, forgetting heaven and God, the more it has need of sanctity, of the immolation of holy Religious, and of that angelic army which combats, in the desert, for the good of souls. Your

beautiful book is the manual of this supernatural strategy: it gives us the knowledge of the laws of this Divine warfare, and prepares its victories. At each page there resounds the echo of that mild yet strong appeal of Him Who is called "the Sower of chaste counsel." I pray Him Who has inspired these pages to bless them and their author.

I am happy to unite, Monsieur le Vicaire Général, my approbation to that of my venerable colleagues, and I pray you to accept the expression of my most sympathetic regards in our Lord.

✠ Louis Anne,
Ev. de St. Claude.

Evêché d'Autun.

Autun, le 3 Octobre, 1874.

Monsieur le Vicaire Général,—

In the Ecclesiastical Retreat of the Diocese of Autun, which ended yesterday, I recommended very particularly the reading and the meditation of the excellent work you have just published, and for which both the pastors of souls, and the theologians faithful to the great traditions of the Catholic science, will be most profoundly grateful to you.

Be so kind as to offer my most respectful homage to his Lordship the Bishop of Poitiers, and accept the assurance of my very humble devotedness in our Lord.

✠ Adolphe Louis, Ev. d'Autun.

Evêché de Moulins.

Moulins, le 24 Novembre, 1874.
En la Fête de Saint Jean de la Croix.

My thanks come very late, my dear Monsieur l'Abbé, and I do not know how you will accept my excuses. But I read slowly, especially good books, which will explain to you how long an excellent work detains me, and at the same time the reason of my long silence. The Carmelites of Poitiers are greatly privileged to listen to, and especially to understand, the lessons you give them; but your modesty deceives you, if it persuades you that it is principally

for them that you have laboured. It is to Theologians, who are interior men, it is to Doctors of souls, and especially to Bishops, that your instructions appertain; and if you have rendered service to the cloister, it is especially in introducing to it the Sacerdotal Order by the study, and, still more, by the emulation, of the virtues which are there practised. I have been too long, Monsieur l'Abbé, and too decidedly won over to matters in which your name is interested, to constitute myself a judge of this beautiful work. I must, therefore, draw a veil over my admiration, and impose silence on my friendship. Besides, my suffrage would add nothing to that of your Bishop, and to the authority of the approbations which accompany his own.

I am assured that you are already preparing a new edition of your work. Certainly you will profit by the little imperfections which have been pointed out to you. They are rare, and are easy to remark in a work so perfect.

As to myself, I hasten to return to the abundance of waters that the Holy Spirit has poured forth through your channel, and I acquit myself as I can of my debt of gratitude by asking Him to take charge of this obligation.

Be so good as to receive, Monsieur l'Abbé, the fresh expression of my affectionate and most respectful regards.

✠ PIERRE,
Ev. de Moulins.

Fernix (*Ain*), *le* 30 *Novembre*, 1874.

Dear and Venerated Friend,—

The success which has attended your work on the Christian Life and Virtues, considered in the Religious State—the first edition so rapidly exhausted; and the glorious suffrages which have applauded its appearance—dispense me from all eulogy. Your book has already taken its place among those works which are the tradition, the life, and the glory of the Church. My heart cannot be silent in its joy; it longs to proclaim aloud the graces that are attached to your pages, for the glory of God and the interest of souls.

I know that the Rev. Fr. de Ponlevoy, that pious and regretted son of St. Ignatius, so learned in matters of asceticism, has pro-

nounced on your work a judgment which characterises it in a few words. "St. Ignatius," he said, "takes us from the earth, and makes us mount, by little and little, up to heaven: this book comes down from heaven, and lifts us from the earth." You have, in truth, applied to your work, if I may so venture to express myself, the method of the Incarnation. You have shown the eternal goodness, the inexhaustible mercy, manifesting itself under the veils of the holy Humanity, and instructing and vivifying us by its beauty and its tenderness. Jesus Christ is, in this book, the Alpha and the Omega, the foundation on which all is built, the sole law of the structure, the ideal continually proposed to us. You make us see, at a glance, that Christianity is but the struggle of life with death; that the Church is but the development of the Word Incarnate by love.

On reading your book we feel ourselves in relation with the living God, and we understand better the universality of the mystery of Jesus. I know few books which explain so clearly the meaning of grace and the intelligence of the supernatural order; and yet you abstain from debasing nature, which, though wounded by sin, remains fundamentally what it is, in truth—the work of God, the necessary pedestal of grace and glory. Each of your chapters is a complete treatise. Your style, clear and winning, makes us penetrate the inward beauties of the Christian Life, whatever may be the height or the depth of the doctrine. If, sometimes, certain passages seem at first difficult to comprehend fully, I venture to say that, if we do not at once understand their full meaning, yet we feel it. I may apply to your book that saying of a Christian peasant who, when listening to his Bishop developing the great mysteries of Christianity, cried out, "The soul hears." Yes, the soul hears; it sees though your pages the life, Divine and human, of Jesus, the life Christian and Catholic.

Sometimes ascetic works are but theories, more or less ingenious and arbitrary, without harmonising with doctrine. As some have attempted to create an isolated philosophy of Christian doctrine, too often the mystical doctrine has been treated as a science apart. You, dear friend, place it in its proper position. It is not till after a long and persevering study of dogma that you have undertaken to write on the Divine Life in the soul. Jesus Christ, in your book, is what He is in the Holy Church—light and heat, the truth, the way, and the life.

You have published a work which, at this epoch, is most opportune, and, in these days, most necessary. Enemies and friends both need a book, luminous and full of substance and life. The outrages on the Religious State, the light in which a large number of Christians regard evangelical perfection, the absence of doctrine, the weakening of the theological sense, the diminution of truth among us—these wants, these facts, all imperatively demand a book which, with a master's authority, gives us the strong and tender exhortations of the Holy Church on these capital points.

God has prepared you, venerated friend, with jealous care for this work of an apostle and a Doctor. You have preached the Gospel to fervent communities, and have directed them in the way of perfection. You have examined books and souls in daily contact with all the doctrinal learning, past and present, of the See of St. Hilary; you have laboured at Rome in the learned commissions preparatory to the Council; you have been one of the most useful auxiliaries in that great assembly of the Vatican. These are some of the rights you have to the publication of your work. I do not speak of those exquisite gifts which God has conferred on you, and which form the secret and the joy of friendship.

It has been asked to what spiritual family, to what school, your book belongs. It seems to me that you have avoided identifying yourself with any.

You derive your doctrine from the traditions of the Dominicans and of the Franciscans; from St. Thomas, from Duns Scotus, from St. Bonaventure. The Order of Mount Carmel, St. Francis of Sales, the Cardinal de Berulle, the Père de Condren, Olier,—you are familiar with each. I have been struck with the testimonials of sympathy which have reached you from the most different quarters. The Jesuit Fathers, in their learned Review, place your work by the side of the "Treatise on Christian Perfection," by Rodriguez—that sublime book, so simple and popular. Your pages breathe poesy: in truth, theology, with its language, so exact and scientific, often becomes in your writings, as it were, coloured and glowing with tints of poetic fire.

You have, dear friend, with Father Faber (and in this affection does not mislead me), the glory of reviving and elevating ascetic theology. I would wish the people of the world to read your work: in your company they would travel, in the most useful and attractive manner, through the regions of the mystical life; they

would no longer judge of the Religious State from those narrow prejudices of which the best minds are not divested. Priests and religious communities will make your book their spiritual nourishment and their delight. They will find in it abundantly that which we demand of the Holy Spirit, in the prayers of the Liturgy, for all that enter the Church—"Doctrinam sanam, scientiam veram, consilium rectum"—sound doctrine, true science, and right counsel.

May our Lord, venerated friend, keep you long in His good and sweet service, in order that you may give us the volumes that we hope for, and which will be worthy of their predecessors.

✠ GASPARD, Evêque d'Hebron,
Vicaire-Apostolique de Genève.

INTRODUCTION

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

God has been pleased to bless this work. More than 2,000 copies have been sold in less than four months: it is one of the signs of this benediction. We have other and still better marks of this blessing from Heaven. Several Archbishops and Bishops have been good enough to join their suffrages to that of the illustrious Bishop of Poitiers, the first and proper judge of this work, since for nearly twenty years I have had the signal grace of being under his teaching and obedience. We publish at the beginning of this second edition these more than encouraging Episcopal Letters. They are our surety, our glory, and our actual reward. They will be to all who read this treatise, or shall read it, a precious guarantee.

Besides these high testimonials, we have received others from several masters of the Christian doctrine, and from a large number of ecclesiastics, who have, on different titles, the qualifications to pronounce a judgment. We are happy to receive their approbation; but what gives us the greatest joy is, that all those, whether

Priests, Religious, or laics, who have written or spoken to us about this book, agree in saying that it has made them feel a greater love for God and His Divine Son Jesus.

This was the sole object of our ambition; and if, indeed, the Divine goodness has permitted us to attain it, we have only to pass the remainder of our life in adoration and in thanksgiving,—an active adoration, however, and a laborious thanksgiving; for we feel ourselves under greater obligation than ever to spend all that God may grant us of strength and time in continuing to write for the holy service of Christianity, and for the spiritual good of our brethren. Two works, which are finished, will appear in the course of the next year: it is only after this double publication that we propose, if it be pleasing to God, to complete, by a third volume, our "Treatises on the Christian Life and Virtues."

Although the success of this, our first work, has surpassed all our hopes, we can explain it, however, in part, by the imperious want which souls have to find, to know, and to possess Jesus Christ. This Divine hunger has been felt in every age of the Christian era. The illusions, the errors, and the misfortunes of the present time have the effect of making this hunger more pressing, at least among the Faithful; and even outside this circle, how many, without knowing it, feel a hunger for Jesus Christ? There are many such persons, even among that senseless crowd, who blaspheme and persecute our Redeemer.

Now, in writing these pages we have endeavoured to

show throughout Jesus Christ, such as He manifests Himself in the infallible instructions of the Church, in the books of both Testaments, and especially in the Holy Gospel. It has been our greatest desire and effort to manifest Jesus Christ as the centre, the foundation, and the stay of all things; the sum and the key of all the designs of God in the world; the great central place of meeting which God assigns to all the creation, and, consequently, the common shelter, the universal country, the light of minds, the joy of hearts, the life, liberty, dignity, and peace of the human race—in a word, that supreme, total, and indispensable Good to which all living beings aspire! Without doubt, it is not our own will nor our own effort which can put Jesus in so clear a light, and gain souls to His service: there is need of the all-powerful mercy of God. But God desires much more to give Jesus to men than men wish to receive Him, though they may be among the Faithful, and though they may be Saints; and what time is more propitious for the great mercies of God than that in which there are everywhere so many and such great miseries!

Let it be always kept in mind that the good which this book has done, or may yet do, is entirely owing to the grace of our Lord, and the free gift of the infinite goodness of our Heavenly Father.

Profiting by several just observations which have been made to us, we have somewhat slightly retouched our work, in a literary point of view, endeavouring to make the style as faultless as possible. In addition to this, in

order to anticipate any misunderstanding, and to make it easier to comprehend certain exalted and delicate points of doctrine, we have added here and there some very brief notes. Apart from these slight changes, which yet we consider as not without importance, this second edition is the exact reproduction of the first. Some have regretted, we have been told, that the whole of the book appears to be founded on the great Franciscan doctrine, according to which the Word would have been made Flesh even if Adam had not sinned—that is to say, it is founded on a theological opinion which, though authorised, is yet only an opinion, and has not, from this very fact, that immovable solidity which a foundation requires, and which is the property of a dogma of faith. Evidently this regret only springs from misconception. It is very true that on this point the opinion of Alexander, of Hales, and of Scotus is our own, and it seems founded on the gravest reasons.*

But first, far from establishing this view as an undisputed doctrine, we have several times reminded our reader, and in explicit terms,† that a good number of theologians, and of high authority, do not admit it—not so much, as Suarez observes,‡ because they held it to be

* Many theologians share this opinion. Suarez (De Incarnat. Disput. v.) gives a very respectable list of names. The number has increased since. In our days, the very learned, enlightened, and pious Fr. Faber follows the opinion of Scotus. See his beautiful volumes, "The Precious Blood" and "The Blessed Sacrament."

† Particularly in the first part of the Treatise on Christian Suffering.

‡ De Incarnat. Disput. v. sect, ii.

untenable and improbable, but because it did not seem to them to be sufficiently proved from the Holy Scriptures.

Besides—and it is our own reply—the hypothesis of the Incarnation of the Word, independently of sin, is not in any way the foundation of our work. Our real and only foundation is that of St. Paul, who has said, "For other foundation no man can lay but that which is laid"—laid, that is, by God, laid by the Church, namely, Jesus Christ.*

Whatever might have happened if Adam had not fallen, "the Word has truly become Flesh, and has dwelt among us." Now, this Word Incarnate, Who is Christ, the Mediator of religion as well as of redemption, holds, in fact, the first place in the Divine works; He is the "first-born" of all creatures—the Alpha and the Omega of the ways of God; the chief of Angels and of men, the sum of all, crowning all, deifying all.

He is the model of perfection, the rule of predestination—the source, in a word, uncreated and created, of grace and glory—that is to say, of the supernatural life, both in this world and in the next, and, consequently, of the Christian Life, and of all the virtues which flow from and which manifest it.†

This, I repeat, is the foundation of our book, in which we do not say anything which does not spring from this mystery of Christ, nothing which does not flow from it,

* 1 Cor. iii. 11.

† Conc. Trident. Sess. vi. c. 16.

nothing which does not refer to it, which does not end in it.

Now, this mystery is not only a dogma; it is the dogma on which rest all the other dogmas, and the very substance of Christianity.

We are unwilling to conclude this introduction without testifying our gratitude to all those who, with so much zeal, knowledge, and sagacity, and, above all, with so much kindness, have aided in making known and in propagating our work by noticing it in the Catholic press.

POITIERS, 8TH DECEMBER, 1874.
The Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M.

NOTICE OF THE EDITORS.

THE success which has attended this work is a sufficient indication of its importance, and makes it unnecessary to allude to it further.

Ten thousand copies have been sold in less than eighteen months. The fourth edition, in two volumes octavo, which we now present to the public, has an additional element of interest in a complete revision of the Analytical Tables at the beginning of the work.

Hitherto the principal divisions only of the work were paged, which made it difficult to find any passage that merited more study. This book, in fact, so full of instruction, so substantial, so profound, is one of those to meditate on rather than simply to read.

We have thought it well to satisfy a want universally felt, by introducing into the Tables a paging more detailed, which refers not only to the principal heads, but also to such secondary thoughts which are only their development.

In another point of view, in order to satisfy the desire we have already expressed, this book, having now its

allotted place in the libraries of all ecclesiastics, of all religious houses, of all persons of piety, we have resolved to publish it jointly in two editions of different size and price, one in 2 vols. 8vo., the other in 3 vols. 18mo.

The third edition in 18mo. being almost all sold, the fifth, in 3 vols., is in the press, and will appear next March (1876).

PREFACE.

THE book we publish is the fruit of many years spent in the labours of the sacred ministry. The Priest is not altogether free to write on any subject he may choose. The life he leads, the duties he has to discharge, the needs for which he has to provide, the character and the condition of those with whom he has to do, necessarily determine the channel of his thoughts, the choice of his studies, and the subject-matter of his labours. It is no disadvantage. Without speaking of the teaching of experience, and of that knowledge it alone can give, duty, without doubt, is a better counsellor than the fancy or the imagination.

The Priest lives, here on earth, in the midst of the moving spectacle of the necessities of every kind which torment the creatures of God; while he knows, at the same time, with an intimate conviction, that the doctrine of which he is personally the witness and the apostle, contains all that man wants to satisfy his hunger, and to gratify his just desires. If, yielding to the influence of this twofold illumination, he decides on declaring pub-

licly what the Divine mercy discovers to him of that truth of which he knows the infallible certainty, he finds himself, humanly speaking, in the most favourable position to utter words of life, which will bring forth their vivifying fruits. A book has not the same chance of success if it only translates the ordinary conceptions of an isolated mind, uninfluenced by the happy impulses we generally feel when called upon to confer a benefit, or to relieve a suffering.

And further: If man has the right to hope for that assistance from on high which, sustaining and guiding the workman, forms the value and success of the work, it is so, assuredly, when the labour which is undertaken discharges the duty of his profession in life, and tends, by its nature, to the end which God Himself proposes in all that He has made—I mean, to the glory of His Son Jesus Christ, and the salvation of souls.

The infirmity of the writer may manifestly cancel all these advantages. If it is so with ourselves, we should be more pained than surprised. Let this be as it may; it is our duty to mention, first of all, how this book came into being. It contains the instructions which, during many years, under different circumstances, and in different ways, we have given to those who have been confided to our care; endeavouring by these means to enlighten their faith, to encourage their hope, inflame their love, and to sanctify their life. Explained in separate parts, these doctrines have enlightened more than one mind; and they have touched, calmed, and

rejoiced more than one heart. Have we been rash in thinking that the grace which accompanied them, when given separately, would not be withdrawn from them when they form, united, a sort of general theory of the designs of God on the world, and of what we may call the science of sanctity?

The title of the book points out its subject. It treats of the Christian Life and Virtues. The Christian Life is that excellent life which, having God for its Model and its Principal, becomes, in Jesus Christ, and by Jesus Christ, the rule of human life—a rule sublime and full of attractive sweetness; but, above all, a rule full of authority, to which we cannot, without sin, refuse to be subject, and which we cannot definitely reject, without being disowned in the sight of God, and being lost for eternity. The virtues cannot be separated from this life: they are their natural outcome, and the indispensable mark of their existence.

They are this Divine life itself, in its human splendour and in its sanctifying action. Necessary roots of our good works, they are the foundation of that Christian merit of which the glory of heaven is the highest fruit and reward. Each of them constitutes in us a particular mark of resemblance with Jesus Christ, and becomes, as it were, a special power to raise us up towards our Heavenly Father. The Christian Life and Virtues are, then, briefly, what the Gospel calls "*the one thing necessary.*" There is no subject which is more worthy than this of the attention of mankind. It ought not only to

interest them, but they should be ardently devoted to it, considering that its beauty and its grandeur are equal to its importance.

But the same reasons which have led us to treat of the Christian Life and Virtues, have induced us to consider them in the most perfect ideal in which they are manifested to us on earth—I mean in the *Religious State*, in which those who, by vow, follow the holy evangelical counsels, are engaged thereby to labour during their whole life after perfection. This point of view necessarily gives a special character to our book, and assigns to it a particular class of readers. We address, then, first of all, the holy family of Religious, and more particularly of religious women—an immense family, though but one in the election of God; a family which is imperishable, in spite of the hatred of hell and the unjust violence of the world, which, whether with knowledge or in ignorance, ministers to this enmity. It is, in truth, to the service of religious women this ministry of which I have spoken has, by the sweet Providence of God, been principally devoted, and to whom this present work owes its origin; and as its substance springs from this source, so does also, necessarily, its form and style.

After the instructions have once been given, ought we so to modify this style as to eradicate from our work all traces of its first design? We have not thought so, nor do we imagine it to be possible. It would be necessary to alter its fundamental principle—that is, to make another work. If it had been more adapted to the

general reader, our work would have become of a more ordinary character: probably, what it would have appeared to gain in having more readers, it would have lost, and more than lost, in reaching, less surely and less profoundly, each of those who might peruse it.

Besides, shall we own it? Without being indifferent about the matter, we are not so much interested as to the number of our readers. We only wish, as the reward of our labours, to increase, though it be ever so little, the humble flock of God's chosen friends, or to confer some supernatural gift on those He has already. This grace would make our heart overflow with gratitude towards Him, and we should reckon ourselves repaid more than a hundredfold.

Still, have we positively renounced the multitude, and do we resign ourselves to publish a book that would only be unpopular and restricted in its use? Such is not our thought, and we have a better hope of our work than this.

Besides—thanks be to God that religious women, especially in our dear France, form of themselves a considerable army, and more considerable, surely, than that of religious men—is it not clear that what suits the one suits the other also in numberless ways? Their vocation is the same. The same vows bind them. They are wending their way towards the same country, and by the same road. The bread which nourishes the Sisters is, then, the natural and regular diet of the Brothers, and it is from one only source that the waters flow which slake

the thirst of both. If, in the instruction they both receive, any difference is to be found, it never extends beyond a mere shadow. Has not St. Paul, inspired by God, declared that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, there is neither male nor female? Have the innumerable Theotimes who have studied and relished that master-work of St. Francis of Sales, "The Treatise of the Love of God," and have read, meditated, and relished that other master-work entitled "The Introduction to a Devout Life"—have they, I say, read these great works with less ardour, or with less fruit, than the multitude of Philothea's, to whom the holy Bishop of Geneva has especially addressed it? And in regard to these two works, as to so many others, among which the spiritual correspondence of the Saints occupies the first rank, is there not a true reciprocity?

It is not enough to say that this book appears to us to suit religious men as well as religious women. If we are not mistaken, it should be useful also to Priests—if not for their own personal sanctification, which, by the grace of God, it can, however, also effect, at least to assist them in the important study of the Religious Life, and in the direction of souls—whether those who are already vowed to perfection, or those whom God calls to embrace it, not only at their entrance into religion, but even (and there may be more of this class than we think) while remaining in the world, and in the holy state of marriage. If, in the course of our instructions, we have thought it our duty to cite, in the form of a note, the Latin text of

the Holy Scriptures,* or of the Holy Fathers, or of theologians whose doctrine we wish to have explained, or whose authority we would quote, it is clear that we have done this especially in the interest of Priests, in order that they may be able to verify what we say, and trace our words back to the sources whence we have drawn them ourselves. In a word, we venture to presume that this book will do good to every person who has the habit of, and the relish for, piety; to every one who is attracted to the interior life, and desirous of being initiated or confirmed in it; to all those even who wish to know, and seriously to practise, the Christian virtues.

Supposing that they would condescend to read it, would it be useless to the worldly-minded, to the slaves of their passions, to those who live without reflection, to unbelievers, to so many hearts who are only seduced by a false, because they are ignorant of the true, happiness, to so many minds who continue in darkness, only because the rays of a sure light have never shone upon them? It seems to me that this book may be a blessing to such persons; because the reply to our objections, the solution of our gravest difficulties, is often found in the simple exposition of that Divine and human harmony which we call Christianity! So many bright lights beam forth from our sanctuaries—bright lights which illumine not only the naves of our temples, but their outer courts, and even the public squares in the distance! Our faith

* See Translator's Preface.

in the virtue of the Catholic truth is without bounds; and whom are we to teach that, in the will of God, this truth is the patrimony of all? The great misfortune of the world is, that after so many centuries, in which, from one end of the earth to the other, the Church has not ceased to teach it, Christianity should be still unknown, and especially that it should not be appreciated by so large a number. As to ourselves, having the honour, the grace, and the happiness of explaining, at least on its practical side, this great Christian doctrine, we doubtless have in view, first of all, these chosen hearers whom God Himself has given us; but we have no formal will to exclude a single person from our audience, and, whilst we were writing, it has appeared to us many times that we were speaking to the whole world.

When our Lord preached on the mountain, or on the borders of the lakes of Judæa, the Apostles formed His usual audience. Called before all the rest, faithful followers of a Master for whom they had quitted all, His Disciples by day and by night—destined, moreover, to become throughout the entire universe His authentic witnesses and official representatives—they had every possible right to that place of preference in the happy audience of Wisdom itself made Man. But behind them there always stood a vast and motley crowd, of all kinds of persons—of lettered and ignorant, of rich and poor, of the just and of sinners, of women and children. To this crowd the Word of God was preached: it was uttered for all; and not only they heard the Word, but they received

the grace which it contained in its plenitude. Each received of the gift whatever his vocation demanded, and whatever accorded with his actual dispositions. No one among them went away empty but those whose hearts were voluntarily and obstinately closed against the truth. Thus it is, in due proportion, with every Christian word; and if God has permitted that we should do in reality what, for His love, we have attempted to do, this book is a Christian word. If it is in any way a blessing, it is a blessing for the benefit of the Church: it belongs, therefore, to all her members.

Briefly, what has been our object? In the thirteenth century St. Bonaventure composed a very beautiful little work called "The Itinerary of the Soul," or rather, "The Way to Understand God." The work naturally bears the impress of the particular genius of the holy Doctor, of his science and piety. It was fitted for that age, in which it excited great admiration, and in which it exercised a powerful influence. Our humble work is also, in its way, a sort of itinerary of the soul to God. Each of the seventeen treatises of which it is composed is, as it were, a station on this road, a step in this ascent.

We beg that, before perusing the book, the reader will please to take a glance at the Analytical Table, which will be found at the beginning of each volume. He may see there the summary of the plan and the arrangement of this itinerary, and perhaps by that means he will be encouraged to follow on our track.

This work, we would remark, shows us Christianity in

its practical aspect. This is the reason why we have continually given our attention to found on dogma, on doctrine, the precepts we have proposed, the affections we have endeavoured to excite, and all the directions which we have sought to impress with regard to conduct. In God's family, light is the very atmosphere whichs upports our life, and the principle of all its movements. We are children of light, and divinely established to perform the works of light. Our Master is the Word; our first virtue is faith. Christianity is a revelation, and illumination is one of the names which all antiquity has given to our Baptism. Nothing, then, is surely and efficaciously practical if it is not very solidly, and on every point, founded on doctrine.

In a good number of spiritual books, in our opinion, dogmatic theology has been too much separated from ascetic or mystical theology. This has been a detriment both to the book and to the student. Mystical theology is only the fruit, and can be nothing else. Dogmatic theology is the natural and indispensable sap. It was our duty to ask help from the mystics, and we have done so in an ample measure. But the reader will see also that, whether for laying the foundations of our duties, in explaining their reasons, or for determining their nature, in specifying precisely the notion of the virtues, we have ordinarily and largely drawn from theologians, properly so called; and especially from him who, by common consent, is, and always remains, the prince among the rest—the incomparable St. Thomas Aquinas. After the

Holy Scripture, which we cannot rightly understand but by the aid of theology, it appears to us that these great masters of sacred science are also the masters of the Spiritual Life.

What we have sought, above all, is to render Jesus Christ present in all parts of this book. We wish most ardently that the secret, the substance, and, as it were, the sum of this book, should be Jesus Christ alone. The Person of Jesus Christ should never be isolated from His doctrine. If all is life in His doctrine, it is because it emanates from Him Who is Life; and because, by the holy words He utters, by the precepts He lays down, by the counsels He recommends, by the attractions He displays, by the advances He makes, by the succours He offers, and by the pledges which He gives, His purpose is solely to communicate life to His beloved creatures—that life which consists in a real, intimate, consummate, eternal union with Himself; the true, and sovereign, and absolute life. We cannot repeat it too often: the end of all the moral law, and, consequently, of all our duties; the end of all our labours, of our progress, the sum of our perfection and of our sanctity, is this living union with Jesus.

Many things we have omitted, which might certainly have filled up the sketch which we have traced out in advance. We think, however, we have done better by keeping to the principal matters, and which alone are essential. Yet, we confess it, although in its present state this work forms a whole, it has, in our idea, a sequel

which is natural, if not necessary. If God lends us life and strength, we shall give it to the public a little later, and it will be the matter of a third and last volume. Several reasons have made us decide on publishing these two volumes without waiting till the third volume was finished.

Our conscience bears us witness that we have laboured hard and done our very utmost not to advance anything which is not true, wise, discreet, consoling, and sanctifying. We have prayed, perhaps, as much as laboured, beseeching God to preserve us from ourselves, and to prevent us, for His own honour, and for the good of our brethren, from falling into any error. We have not ceased invoking the Blessed Virgin, our Mother, to whom, after God, we owe all, and at whose feet we lay, with humility and with affection, this first fruit of our written labours. All these pages have been submitted to the control of competent judges; and, according to the wise and holy laws of the Church, this book makes its appearance invested with ecclesiastical approbation. But, notwithstanding all our efforts, we must remember the Holy Spirit teaches us, "The thoughts of mortal men are fearful, and their counsels uncertain." (Wisd. ix. 14). It is why we feel the need, in conclusion, of submitting this work, and all that it contains, to the supreme, and infallible judgment of the Holy See; and we do so with the most filial affection.

POITIERS, 5TH JULY, 1874.
The Feast of the Precious Blood of our Lord.

PREFACE OF THE TRANSLATOR.

It is with great diffidence that I offer to the English reader a translation of Mgr. Gay's invaluable work "On the Christian Life and Virtues, considered in the Religious State."

The nomination of Abbé Gay to the Episcopal dignity in December last, by the Brief, prefixed to this translation, of His late Holiness Pope Pius IX., of glorious memory, is not only a high testimonial to His Lordship's personal merit, but also to the excellence of his great work of "The Christian Life and Virtues." The reader will not fail to notice the high commendation bestowed upon it by our late Holy Father, in the Brief.

I have modified one of Mgr. Gay's arrangements, particularly alluded to in His Lordship's Preface. I have not given the Scripture texts in full at the foot of the page from the Latin Vulgate, as His Lordship has designedly done, "for the benefit of the Clergy, that they might verify his words, and be able to trace them back to the original sources whence he drew them." In the translation, I have thought it well to quote only the Book, the

chapter, and verse, of the Holy Scripture; and these are inserted in the text. My object in doing this, was not only to save expense in printing, but to practise the reader, and especially the student, in *referring* to the Latin Vulgate, or to our English *authorised* version, so familiar to us, for the passages thus quoted.

For, this invaluable work is not intended to be read only, and then laid aside, but to be repeatedly studied with attention and care, both by Religious, by the Clergy, and by the Laity. The quotations in Latin from the Fathers, as they are intended for the Clergy, are given in foot-notes, as in the original.

Every reader of this work is strongly recommended to peruse the analytical tables, which are placed at the commencement, instead of at the end, of each volume, *before* reading the respective treatises. These tables will be found of great utility to the reader, and especially to the student.

Should any, not being acquainted with the French original, receive, by the Divine blessing, any grace whatsoever, from the perusal of this translation, the translator humbly asks of such, a prayer for his own final perseverance in the holy state of Religion.

WOOLMER, LIPHOOK, HANTS, MARCH 14, 1878.
Feast of St. Thomas of Aquin.

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ON THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

We cannot approach the subject which we propose to treat, without deep and holy emotion. To expound any part whatever of the Christian doctrine, to explain, though it be to children, any point of revelation, is already to plant one's foot in a heavenly land, and to walk in a road too high not to inspire a certain dread. The want of faith or of reflection may hinder the soul from rising to this legitimate fear, but if it knows and feels what it is doing, it is only a very great trust in grace that can give it confidence and tranquillity.

What will it then experience if it attempts to penetrate the depths of dogma, without which it seems impossible clearly to make known the way of the perfect, and to conduct them to the heights to which they aspire? "Seek not the things," the Holy Spirit tells us, "that are too high for thee, nor into things above thy ability" (Eccli. iii. 22). Filled with this divine wisdom, the humble and sincere David cries out, "Lord, my heart is not exalted, nor are my eyes lofty; neither have I walked in great matters, nor in wonderful things above me" (Psalm cxxx. 1). Are we going to preserve the right of rendering to ourselves a similar testimony; and do we not deserve to be taxed with rashness for having conceived the design of this work?

To study the Christian life from that height and in that perfection which Religious conceive of it, and embrace it, is not in truth to continue dwelling in the fields of the Father of the family; it is to enter into the gardens reserved for the spouse (Cant. v. 1). It is to be no longer satisfied with knowing the kingdom of God in parables (St. Luke viii. 10); it is to try to discover their hidden sense, and to create in oneself the dawn of that supernatural day, the noon of which is called the vision of eternity. These doctrines are the store-rooms of the King (Cant. i. 3), of which He alone has the key, to which He alone can conduct us. Under penalty of losing our way, of stumbling, of a violent fall perhaps, we must follow Him closely, and never leave Him. It is in this that it is emphatically true, that without Him we can do nothing (St. John xv. 5). It is a question both of seeing very secret things, and of seeing them with a great clearness. Science does not suffice for this, although it is necessary; it is wisdom which is indispensable. We must go straight to principles, and approach as nearly as we can to that first principle, which alone solves all problems, because it alone makes us see things in their lowest depths. Humility of mind, purity of heart, simplicity and fervour of prayer, do more for us here than sagacity. Intuition in this matter sometimes renders us greater service than reasoning; we often walk on this road by instinct, we live especially by influences; in a word, grace is here the great mistress; it is everything to abandon ourselves to it, and to keep ourselves thus abandoned.

We comprehend besides, that in an order so elevated, and so exquisite, everything is of consequence. It is a world of delicate questions, where we must take care,

not only what we say, but also, what terms we make use of. If we are mistaken on any point when engaged in our private studies, supposing we are in good faith, the evil may be slight; but if we err in the instructions we give to others, the error easily becomes too dangerous, not to be, generally speaking, a grave one. The more so, that here (and it is the case with every Christian instruction), we do not wish to limit ourselves formally to instruct. While communicating knowledge to those to whom we are speaking, we have also the high ambition of increasing the growth of their interior life, of perfecting in them the image of Jesus Christ, and of making them advance in their union with God. Certainly it is a great blessing to unveil to them sights of heaven, and to excite in their hearts the admiration of holy things, and to enable them to keep holy festivals; but if that were the only fruit of a work, that work would remain more or less without profit. Even when the seed is divine, to sow is not positively good, if the germ be blighted. Light producing love, love ripens into sanctity; this is the order, this then is the object to be aimed at. Most assuredly, it is ours. If we did not keep this object in view, we should be destitute of sense. If, while aiming at it, we did not attain it, we should be greatly to be pitied. How many interests, then, and what interests are here at stake, and what an engagement do we take upon ourselves, from the moment that we employ ourselves about them! All this explains the emotion we feel, and seems to justify our anxiety.

This is not all. What souls are those we seek to benefit? God forbid that we should exclude a single one. God, who, in His human family, makes so many distinctions, makes no exclusion. When we decide to

publish this work, we doubtless intend to speak to Christians living in the world; we have them, we shall always have them, in view. But even if we do not actually address them, we speak for their profit, and in their presence. We think that everything contained in this book may and ought to interest them; we wish that it may seriously profit their souls; we have the well-founded hope that they will derive from it very many advantages. Yet we address ourselves first of all to you, happy and privileged souls, who have the signal grace to be consecrated to God by the holy vows of religion. Now, by this single fact that it concerns you, and belongs to you, what dignity attaches to this good work, and how far-reaching is its extent! Among those myriads of beings for whom Jesus Christ has died, you are loved, singularly loved, and you are for the same reason, inestimably precious! Immediately after the priest, stand the holy virgins! "O Mary, saint among the saints," chants the Church, "help the miserable, come to the aid of the faint-hearted, console those who weep." You hear it, it is the entire Christian people, it is the great crowd of humanity: it is marked by its well-known characteristics, characteristics incontestable, common, and universal, which are also its titles to the compassion of Heaven. But besides, O divine elect one, continues the canticle, pray in particular, and fervently, for all those whom the sovereign love has drawn from this multitude, "intercede for the clergy, and for religious women!" You see, then, your rank in the solicitudes of our holy mother the Church, whose heart is the infallible echo of the heart of God. You are pre-eminently the spouses of Jesus Christ; you enter more deeply into His life, into His happiness, into His works, into His sacrifice. Nearer to the centre,

you are able to shed your rays farther off; more pure, you can exhale a sweeter perfume; more chaste, you should become more fruitful: each individual life among you is a grave event in the history of the empire of souls. Who knows if among you there is not some one, whom God destines to become the spiritual head of an entire generation, and the supernatural mother of a whole people? Now, if after that astonishing privilege of the priest, to handle at the altar the natural Body of Jesus, there is nothing more solemn and more holy than to handle His mystical Body, what is this but to touch the parts of His Body which are the most noble, and the most delicate? Certainly God is everywhere, in this blessed Body, as in the human body, the soul is in every part. Yet, when a brother's wounded feet are to be dressed, or an eye is to be cared for, must we not make use of very different remedies, and go to work in a different manner? Such is nearly the condition in which our undertaking places us. It is not, doubtless, the eyes of the Church on which we have to operate (although by the contemplation which holds so principal a part in your life, you might also merit the honour of being figured by this symbol), but it is most assuredly with a portion of His Heart, that we have to do.

Such indeed, is our feeling about the work we have undertaken, of its grandeur, its importance, its difficulty, and of our own incapacity, that if we listened to ourselves, we should not have the courage to commence it. But we feel pressed by influences so many and so great, that without becoming a traitor to our conscience, and running risk of giving God displeasure, we could not even attempt to resist them. Only, hoping and imploring before all things the aid of Heaven, we experience also the need of

asking that of earth—this earth, is yourselves, the pious family of religious women, and after you it is the readers of this book. God says in the prophet Osee, "I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil" (Osee ii. 21). Once more, you are the earth; and these fruitful seeds, which being given you from on high, nevertheless implore your aid, since without your succour, they cannot yield fruit; this oil which softens all things, this wine which strengthens, and also "cheers the heart of man" (Psalm ciii. 15), this corn which nourishes our life—you easily guess that all these are the holy word of God. Receive it, this great and beneficent word, though it is here presented to you under such frail and imperfect figures; receive it, as we give it you. We shall endeavour to give it you in the spirit of Jesus; receive it also in the same spirit—that is to say, with faith, humility, simplicity, docility, and love. While you read, pray. Whilst in His human manifestations, God remains a Being holy, unsearchable, hidden; even when He speaks from without, we can understand Him only within us: it is, then, in our interior, under penalty of not understanding them at all, it is fitting that we listen to those who instruct us in His name. If you read this book as little children, it will make you, we hope, of a manly strength, and will give you that spiritual maturity, which St. Paul so well calls, "the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ" (Ephes. iv. 13).

In building a palace or a temple, it is of the greatest importance that the structure should be solid, resting on good and stable foundations, and that the rules of architecture should be throughout the work carefully observed. "You are," says St. Paul to all Christians, "God's build-

ing, now, according to the grace of God which is given me, as a wise architect, I have first laid the foundation". (1 Cor. iii. 10). We may build upon this foundation, walls of gold, of silver, or of wood, but without a good foundation, nothing will stand. So, in speaking to you of the religious life, it is most necessary to explain thoroughly what is the Christian life, which is its first foundation, and its indispensable support. For it is of extreme importance never to forget, and in the matter we are treating of, it is a sort of first principle, that a Nun worthy of the name of Religious, is nothing else than a better kind of Christian, and therefore, before all things, she should be a good Christian. In the moral order, she advances by rule beyond her brothers and sisters who remain in the world, but she does not follow another path; she starts from the same point as they do, and she aims at the same object. Their point of departure is the same, it is revelation and grace; the supreme object to which all aspire is beatitude; and the means made use of, or the road along which they pass, is, without doubt, justice, in a greater or less degree, but in reality it is the same justice, and the accomplishment of the same essential duties. If Baptism renders to God thirty-fold for one, if it should yield sixty or even a hundred-fold, it is, after all, only one Baptism. Whether religion binds the roots only of our being, or binds it entirely, it is but one religion. If love makes us walk, work, and serve, or if it makes us run, fly, and immolate ourselves, it is but one and the same love. In a word, there are, doubtless, several degrees, and truly several states of life in the Church, but the Church has but one life, which is truly that excellent life of which we wish first of all to speak to you, the Christian and catholic life, the life which is the

only and universal life, the life divine and human of Jesus.

It is, then, in this order that this treatise has for its subject the Christian life; we will keep to this order, and to throw the light of a clear and more perfect day on this vast subject, we will endeavour—first, to tell you what this life is in itself, its sublime commencement, and all the admirable history of its advent here on earth; afterwards, we will consider this same life in the creature, investigating what it becomes in us, what it is doing there, and, finally, what it puts us in the way both of becoming and doing.

I.

Saint Paul, speaking of grace, which is one of the authentic and principal names of the Christian life, says that it is "life everlasting in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. vi. 23). It is a divine phrase, and contains in substance the whole doctrine which we desire to set forth. But in order to have a thorough comprehension of the theology of the great Apostle, it is first of all indispensable that we should have a very exact idea of the nature of man.

Man, although but one being, is a marvellous compound of several kinds of life, whose perfection goes on increasing, and which, without being either separated or confounded, are placed one above the other. Each of these lives, if we consider it in itself, is, in the truest sense, supernatural with regard to those over which it has dominion. It is clear, for example, that to bring forth flowers, and to bear fruit, would be, for a mineral, a supernatural act; that, to walk, to feel, and to discern, would be so for a vegetable; and if a brute reasoned and spoke, it would do something very much above its nature.

Now, man is at the same time both this mineral which puts forth flowers, and this shrub which walks, which knows, which enjoys, or which suffers, and this brute which argues, which comprehends and discourses. His nature is precisely to be the united, substantial, living, and permanent action of these different lives. Besides, these lives are so extensive, so rich, and so fruitful, that outside this creature, for whom God has made them, and to whom he has subjected them, each forms the type of an entire species—that is to say, of an immense category of beings divinely determined, and in which similar and innumerable individuals take rank, and succeed each other.

Man is thus like an animated house, in which there are several stories of life. These stories are in themselves sufficiently solid and complete, and provided with necessaries enough to serve for the regular dwelling of a particular and unlimited series of existences; moreover, they are so distinct, that, when they are separated, the lower have naturally no possible communication with the upper; but in our humanity God bound them together so intimately, that they form absolutely one single dwelling, which is the property, the abode, of one only master and ruler.

This master is the soul. It is to it that all owe their being. It is the soul which animates, sustains, and contains all the rest. The soul is not only the first, but the only seat, and, as the Church instructs us, "the substantial form"* of all those lower lives which subsist in us, even of

* Doctrinam omnem seu positionem temerè asserentem aut vertentem in dubium quod substantia animæ rationalis aut intellectivæ vere ac per se humani corporis non sit forma, velut erroneam ac veritati catholicæ fidei inimicam, prædicto sancto approbante concilio, reprobamus.—Concil. Vienn. Labbe. Tom. xi.

those whose function is beyond the phenomena of which we are conscious.

When God made us, He did not make us first dust, then a plant, then an animal without reason. He took us from the moist earth, which He had kneaded and fashioned; then, breathing on the face of this inert statue, He breathed into it a soul, and by that breath He gave it at once both the power which makes us think, and that which makes us feel, that which makes us grow, that which makes us move (Gen. ii. 7). The soul is not the spontaneous, or the laborious, efflorescence of lives, which, commencing at a lower point, acquire, more or less rapidly, successive degrees of perfection; it is a life which is one, whole, superior, and excellent, which contains in a supereminent degree all the lives below it, and which in its most simple unity becomes more than an equivalent to the multiplicity of their powers, and for the diversity of their functions. In spite of this, there is nothing more real nor more evident than these different degrees of life, of which the soul is in us, the union or combination. Nothing, I say, is less incontestable than the essential powerlessness of each of these lives, taken in itself, to raise itself to a superior order of life; and, nevertheless, nothing is more legitimate than this title of supernatural which we have given to these many lives, in reference to this one life.

It is a magnificent life with which God endows us in giving us this soul; magnificent, because of this world of lives, of powers, and of states of existences, which it sums up, in crowning them; magnificent, on account of that spiritual and divine world, at the threshold of which it places us, and with which it puts us in relation. It is clear that, constituted thus, this human life becomes the

appointed place of meeting for all the inferior creation and its common basis, in order to communicate intellectually, affectionately, and religiously, with God. Man is the eye of all that does not see, the heart of all that does not feel, the tongue of all that is mute, throughout the whole universe.

Whatever may be the manner in which this knowledge springs up in him, he knows the Infinite—he has the idea of God; not only does his reason assure him of His existence, but he conceives something of His nature, and gets a glance at His perfections* (Wisd. xiii. 5; Rom. i. 20). He sees His footsteps in every place, apprehends His image in himself, and discovering in this Being a majesty so sovereign, a beauty so ravishing, and a perfection so consummate, he comprehends and feels at once that his first duty is to adore Him, to love Him, to obey Him, and that the accomplishment of this duty, being the glory of him who renders it, is at the same time his peace and his felicity; and not only is he able, by his nature, to keep himself at this height, and there to accomplish his noble acts, but such is his intrinsic strength, and such the career naturally opened out to him, that under the guidance, and with the necessary aid of God, he can advance there continually—that is to say, there he may always be attaining to a greater knowledge of things; there he can improve his experience; there he may become continually better; finally, there may all his faculties bud, and blossom, and unfold.

This being, so royal, and already so superior to all over whom he rules, has yet some one above him. His reason itself proves this to him even to demonstration. He reigns, but by delegation, with responsibility, and

* Concil. Vatican. Constit. *Dei Filius.*

under control. He is the created God of the visible world; but by the very fact that he has been created, he cannot be the God who is supreme. Therefore, we must either abandon our common sense, or we must not pretend that we are the first essence. We are beyond the other beings, which are below us, but then the first essence is incomparably beyond us; and even after He has created us, He holds immutably over us the infinite superiority, which a self-existent Being holds over nothing. This Being is then, with regard to us, entirely supernatural; and, however little we may reflect on this truth, we must see, that being so for us, He is so, on the same title, for every nature that exists, or that is possible; and this is the same thing as to say, that He is the one, only, absolute, self-existent Being, and the highest in the supernatural order.

This seems incontestable, and yet a difficulty starts up before us; for I have said, and neither reason, or faith, leave us any room to doubt it, we know this Being, Whom we call God; it is even by our nature that we know Him, and this is our special note and glory. Now to know Him, is it not to reach Him? to attain to Him? more especially as love naturally follows knowledge, and as union is the regular effect and consequence of love. Are we not then forced to say that however supernatural God may be in Himself, He ceases to be supernatural for the intelligent creature? If, then, in our relations with Him, we start from a very low point; if we have, in order to comprehend Him, only a mere faculty whose exercise depends on time, is subject to a thousand conditions, and supposes at least a labour, the good use of this faculty permits us, however, to be united to Him in the end; so that if nature does not suffice in its first state, to unite us

to God, it is sufficient to do so at last, in its final and normal development.

It is very true; a knowledge of God which is human, mediate, abstract; the love of God, which can produce this moderate knowledge, and the degree of union which a love of this sort can effect: all this really forms a part of the order in which our nature places us; by this sole fact, that we are endowed with reason, and are free, we can, we ought thus to attain to, to reach God. But be not deceived, God Himself, thus attained, thus reached, is still a stranger God; and with this limited relation between us, and our Creator, not only we have no real part of His life, but we do not even perceive this life as a spectacle at a great distance; hardly do we see its threshold, it is enclosed and separated from us by an impassable abyss; no ray from it ever comes to us, it gives forth for us no sound, no fragrance from it ever reaches us! A familiar comparison will make us understand this truth. Give me the work of an artist: a poem, a symphony, a picture, a statue; from the time I saw this work or heard it, the artist was not unknown to me. I know that he exists, or that he has existed. I know his genius, I know his ability; I have perhaps guessed some points of his character, perhaps I have had some foreshadowings of his heart. But is this knowledge, the knowledge of him, as he is, in his entire being? and even is it truly himself? and if I do not go beyond that knowledge, can I say that I know this man? Suppose that I look at his work twenty times, and even after that, I see twenty works of his of the same merit, that I study all their secret charms, that I perceive all their beauties, I shall have a more complete idea of the artist, I shall admire him more, my sympathy for him will become greater;

but because I have not seen his face, marked his look, heard his voice, because I do not know especially his inward life, his thoughts, his loves, his joys, what he says when he is alone, what gives him rest, what transports him beyond himself—in a word, because I do not know his soul, and the life of his soul, I do not really know this man, I have no living relation with this man, I remain a stranger to this man, and this man remains a stranger to me.

This is in truth the history of our natural relations with God, making, however, this enormous difference, that between this unknown man and myself who see his works, the identity of nature opens a certain and a vast field to my conjecture, whilst between God such as He is, and myself, the poor creature who seeks Him in His works, there is so great a difference, that I cannot draw a conclusion from one to the other, except it be by analogy, in a very small measure, and with an exceeding great reserve.

It is clear, in fact, that God has a life of His own: "Shall I Who make others to bring forth children, Myself not bring forth? saith the Lord" (Isaiah lxvi. 9). He might say also, "I Who give to each the life which suits him, that is to say, that which to the Eyes of My Wisdom is most fitting for him, shall I not have a life of My own?" He has such a life, but what life is it? There, on high, in His eternity, outside this world which "He has made in His merriment, and which He governs in His mirth," which increases not His glory, which does not augment His joy, which, without causing Him the shadow of a privation or of trouble, could in a moment fall back into the nothing from which but yesterday He drew it; what does God do, what does He say, what does He love,

what is His enjoyment? Is He alone? but if He is alone, how is He happy? Is there multiplicity in Him? but Who then is this multiform Being? If He is multiform, how can He be one? Life is at least movement, how can there be movement in the Immutable? A mystery is all this, a mystery for man, a mystery for angels, a mystery for every being that is not God; an essential and eternal mystery; and if this divine life is not even known to us, what share can we have in it? You see then, even in developing itself indefinitively in its order, our nature is necessarily confined within limits. It has many relations with God; where is there any existence which has not? Its own even surpasses those of others in excellence; but in fact, as regards nature, God and it live apart, without intimacy, without intercommunication; we must repeat the word, which is most sad and yet most true, God and it, are strangers to one another.

God could assuredly ordain that this were not so. It is true that to do this, He need not trouble, much less destroy, but He must pass beyond, this fundamental order, which constitutes each nature in itself, and places it in its rank. It might perhaps be necessary to abase His own nature. He would certainly have to elevate our own. But finally, what is easier for God to do, than to cross over, to pass beyond, without destroying, those elementary limits that He Himself had made, and that He Himself had established; that is to say, briefly, to abound in power, in wisdom, in goodness, in regard to His dear creation, to speak to it words, to speak to it more intimately, to enfold it in a closer embrace, to unite Himself to it with bonds more intimate, more holy, and more sweet? If I, poor creature as I am, can nevertheless say to whom I wish, and not say but to whom I wish, that

interior and secret word, that they even do not know, who live by my side, and every day gaze on my face, that word, which contains my soul, which delivers up my heart, and may engross my whole life, cannot God do this too? Doubtless, when it pleases me thus to manifest myself, I find on my own level an intelligence prepared to understand me; the person of this friend was to me but a short time ago a stranger, but his nature was not a stranger; he was my fellow-creature; now God has no fellow-creature, and no spirit is on a level with His. But this necessity in which I find myself, not to be able to build without first laying a foundation, this necessity does not oblige God; and if even nothingness is not rebellious, what resistance to His absolute will can He find in a being already created? Then although between a creature, whatever may be its nature, and this word which God may say to it, if he decides on initiating it into His own interior life, there is an infinite disproportion, whence it results that in fact the creature is not by itself capable of understanding it; yet can anyone deny, that if it is already endowed with intelligence, it has a kind of radical aptitude to perceive all that is intelligible, and therefore also God, Who without dispute is so in the highest degree? For, to reveal Himself to us up to that point, is, without doubt, says St. Thomas, to elevate to a transcendent perfection, a capacity, which, by its own strength, would never have attained to it; which would happen, for example, if the eye of an owl were made strong enough to see the sunlight; but this is not at all to make an eye to hear a sound, an ear behold a sight, to make a stone speak or sing, things, which because they are out of order, might appear to us impossible.* We cannot,

* Divina substantia non sic est extra facultatem intellectûs creati

then, doubt that God, Who in creating the world has manifested His thoughts, can, in revealing Himself, manifest His being; He Who in the first instance, has given us our life, can if it seems good to Him, impart to us His own.

But what He can do, is He willing to do? And if He is willing, will He do it for one, or for several, for these or for those, or will He do it for all? What questions, then, are these, if ever they had been asked during time! But there has not been a day which has seen them raised, nor a day which has seen them resolved; eternity itself has spontaneously decided them, and it is in the clearness of this adorable decision, that the world came into existence under the creating breath of God. God, by an act of freest love, has eternally resolved to communicate His own life, to speak His word to the creature, and to pour forth on it His Holy Spirit. For we know Him now, because He has taught us Himself, His own and intimate life, His essential and personal life, which being infinitely simple and one, He is altogether, at once, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the Father Who eternally engendered His Son, and gives Him His substance; the Son, Who subsists by this generation, and lives by this substantial communication; the Spirit, Who, proceeding from this Father and this Son, as from one only principle, is with them but one and the same nature, one and the same divinity.

quasi aliquid omnino extraneum ab ipso, sicut est sonus a visu vel substantia immaterialis a sensu : nam ipsa divina substantia est primum intelligibile et totius intellectualis cognitionis principium ; sed est extra facultatem intellectûs sicut excellentia sensibilium sunt extra facultatem sensuum, unde et Philosophus dicit quod intellectus noster se habet ad rerum manifestissima sicut oculus noctuæ ad lucem solis.—S. Thom. Summ. contra Gentes, lib. iii, cap. 54.

This formula is doubtless sufficiently obscure for us, but it is infallible and complete; and when we shall see, without shadow, the ineffable reality that it transmits, it will be evident to us, that it contains all life, all power, all fecundity, all glory, all truth, all beauty, all reason, all order, all love, all goodness, all sanctity, all peace, all beatitude, in a word, the whole and entire Divinity.

God speaks to Himself and gives Himself from within Himself. He has then decreed to speak and to give Himself outside Himself, and no Christian is ignorant of the means He has taken. There is no need to inquire if anything else was possible; all is possible to God, and the way in which He is pleased to pass, leaves Him always countless other ways open. All that concerns us, is to know by what way He passes; we have only to follow Him with our praises and adorations. Then among all the creatures to whom He might, if He willed it, speak, give Himself, and unite Himself, God has chosen that creature which, placed in the middle, that is to say, between pure spirits and mere matter, borrows something from the two extremes, and binds them into one: He comes straight to this sum of being, to this treasure of lives, to this abridged universe, which is the nature of man. He establishes Himself thus in the centre of His works, doubtless in order to emit His rays throughout their whole sphere; for here absolute liberty of choice does not diminish at all the sublime conformity of all things.

Further, thus speaking and giving Himself to our human nature, He does not speak to it by halves, He does not pour Himself forth upon it, with measure; all that He is, is the word which He speaks to it; all that

He has, is the gift He bestows upon it. His love proceeds at once to do for it His utmost, and thus to carry out for it His first design, which is to make a man-God.* Thus, God decrees it, the Word, Who is begotten of the Father, and from Whom proceeds the Spirit, will become Flesh, and will live after the manner of men. Herein, then, is the gift of God, herein is grace, herein is the supernatural state, which is the foundation of the Christian state. It is in this gift of God (St. John iv. 10), of which our Lord spoke to the Samaritan woman, in accents by which, after so many centuries, hearts are still divinely moved; it is in this gift of God that He manifests His perfection, in all its fulness. God does not belong more to Himself than He belongs henceforth to this sacred Humanity. Herein, I say, is grace, but grace in its highest truth, in its sublimest model, grace in its substance, in its development, in its glory. It is what St. Augustin remarks after Origen.† Herein is grace, in this sense also, that all that can adorn, illustrate, and embellish a being, all that causes God to take full pleasure in any creature, is found here united; and consequently, whatsoever may be the power, and the want

* We should read in the chapters 4 and 5 of the Second Book of the "Treatise of the Love of God," the admirable exposition that St. Francis, of Sales, gives of this divine plan, "that by attention to the Holy Scriptures, and the doctrine of the ancients, we may discover this plan, and may speak of it, so far as our weakness permits."

† O si cognovisses Dei gratiam per Jesum Christum Dominum Nostrum ipsamque ejus incarnationem quâ hominis animam corpusque suscepit, summum esse exemplum gratiæ videre potuisses.—S. August. De Civit. Dei, lib. x., cap. 29.—Magnum et principale exemplum gratiæ quâ nullis meritis homo efficitur Deus Christus est, et in ipso primordialiter manifestum est.—Origen. in div., hom. iii.

that God gives us, of being charmed, attracted, subdued, ravished, the Word Incarnate is to this want, to this power, an object more than equivalent, an object which is inexhaustible. He is absolute amiability, and grace personified.*

Again, herein is grace, in the sense that the infinite gift, which is in the Incarnation, is completely gratuitous. This Humanity has not the least title of itself to be the object of God's choice. The date of its personal union with God is the date of its existence; it saw the light, so to speak, dawn on the divine Person of the Word; it woke up God when it woke up itself. There is not, then, room for the shadow of any merit, even that of a prayer, of a desire, or even of a look, it is all pure grace.†

Herein also, and in a supreme degree, is that state which with all theologians we call supernatural. In fine, Jesus Christ, a true creature, a man like to us, remaining such in the inviolable integrity of His being, in the plenitude of His life, in the complete liberty of His acts, in a word, in the entire perfection of His order, yet lives at the same time in a far higher way than in this lower order. He lives in an order superhuman, transcendant, heavenly, in the order of the personal and essential life of God, wherein the grace of His union with the Word establishes Him: He dwells there by a sort of ecstasy, regular, tranquil, permanent, total; not only an ecstasy of

* It is what the Spouse says when she calls the Word in the Canticles, "Totus desiderabilis."

† Quisquis in capite nostro præcedentia merita singularis illius generationis invenerit, ipse in nobis membris ejus præcedentia merita multiplicatæ regenerationis inquirat. Neque enim retributa est Christo illa generatio, sed tributa.—S. August. de Prædestin. Sanct., cap. 15.

thought and of sentiment, but a true ecstasy of existence. We understand, that in consequence of this grace, God is in Christ in two unequal ways, and on two different titles. He is there as in all of us, by a presence necessary, elementary, natural to every created being, in this sense, that without it, this being would not have had even its existence; He is there, as first and free cause, preserving what has been created, sustaining it, governing it, directing it towards the end that corresponds with its nature; He is there, creating a man, and bringing forth a human life. But besides, He is there as He is naturally, in Himself, with a presence absolutely supernatural for every created thing, including in it this humanity which He possesses. He is there as one of the constituent terms of this creature, which He has united to Himself, hypostatically by His Word; He is there immediately, substantially, fully, with the modes of existence which flow from His Essence. He is there leading His own life as God, under forms, borrowed, it is true, from an order of life very inferior, but which contain without enclosing it, which interpret without altering it, which transmit without reducing it. You have only to reflect, and you will see clearly that in this union is the finished model of the supernatural state, of the state of grace, of the Christian state, in its substance and in its source.*

This mystery is the master-work of God, and because

* Appareat itaque nobis in nostro capite ipse fons gratiæ unde secundum uniuscujusque mensuram se per cuncta ejus membra diffundit. Eâ gratiâ fib at initio fidei suæ homo quicumque christianus quâ gratiâ homo ille ab initio suo factus est Christus; de ipso Spiritu et hic renatus de quo ille natus.—August. de Prædestin. Sanct., cap. 15.

it is in every respect the most excellent of His works, whatever may be otherwise the date and the circumstances of His manifestation in time, it is most assuredly that which He has willed from the first, and in view of which He made all His other works.*

Saint Paul teaches us this expressly.† Again, once more, in doing all this, God has evidently not done anything of necessity, under any title; if He is free to create, or not to create, what force could compel Him to lower Himself to the rank of creatures, in order to elevate them to His own? Yet who is there who does not see how fitting it was that God, when willing to create, that is to say, to give Himself an exterior glory, and to communicate something of His felicity, should take care, before all else, to secure the success of His enterprise?

A creation deprived of beings who were free, would

* "The Sovereign Providence, forming His eternal project and design of all that He would produce, willed first of all, and loved by preference of excellence, the most amiable object of His love, which is our Saviour, and then in order, other creatures, according as they belonged more or less to His service, and advanced His honour and glory."—S. Fr. de Sales, Traité de l'Amour de Dieu. lib. ii., ch. 5.

† "Who is the image of the Invisible God, the first-born of every creation," &c. Col. i. 15—17. These words refer without doubt and absolutely to the Person of Jesus Christ, that is to say, of the Eternal Word. But it is enough, we think, to read the context with attention, to understand that the Apostle speaks here of the *Word Incarnate*, of this well-beloved Son of the Father, "in Whom we have redemption through His Blood, and the remission of sins." The insisting of the Holy Fathers upon the words "*Primogenitus omnis creaturæ*," in the sense of "*Unigenitus ante omnem creaturam*," is fully explained by the necessity they felt of combating the intolerable abuse that the Arians made of this passage in order to establish their heresy, that because Christ was the first of all creatures, therefore He was a mere creature.

seem assuredly but a feeble creation; on the other hand, a creation entire mistress of its actions, was visibly a hazardous creation.* The mystery of Christ once decreed, it is clear that all was safe. The creature remained "placed in the hands of his own counsel" (Eccle. xv. 14). It is a truth of faith, that although all in Him was impeccable, Christ was free, and served God with a full consent; but let the weaknesses, the defects, and the errors of created beings be then what they might, from the time that the Word was one among them and become their Head, God could not be finally either deceived or disappointed. His Word would never be sent back, His gift would never be refused, His will would never be contradicted, His desires would always be satisfied, His perfections would also be thought of; in a word, gratitude, obedience, respect, and the adoration which is essentially His due, would always be paid Him: and though this mystery of the supernatural union and of grace, would never overpass the limits of the personal humanity of Christ, there would be no void in the order of creation, nor in the mutual relations of God with His creatures, nor any reserve in the divine munificence, nor any restriction in the triumph that they would give to this sovereign love, which is the first principle of all things. All that God could give, He would then from that time give Him; He would receive, even then, all that any creation whatever could give Him.

What is it, then, that God has ordained? That holy

* We do not mean by this that apart from the incarnation, God had not a multitude of resources to insure the perseverance in good of a creation, otherwise free, and mistress of its acts. But we consider here, liberty in itself, with the peril to which every creature is thus exposed, *in viâ*, on its journey.

and beatified life of God, which is at once poured out entirely into this Man, as into an ocean that it fills, and in which, all-infinite as it is, it finds itself at ease; will it run over, will it rise above its limits and overflow them? This universe all-living, sufficing, and elevated, which is the Word made Man, will it be face to face with God, as a servant not wanted, a solitary adorer, a son keeping all the inheritance for himself alone? and for the rest of creatures, if God sees good that there should be any, will He become only a temple closed, a treasure put aside and sealed?

God decides it shall not be so. You understand sufficiently, and this bears on all the rest that we have to say, you understand, that we speak here, after the manner of men, that all these questions, these deliberations, these successive determinations, do not ever take place in the mind of God, and that we cannot apply them to God without folly and unsuitableness. As God sees all things at a single glance, He decides all by a single act, and provides for all simultaneously. But for us, we must follow Him step by step, according to the order that we see ourselves, and so far as our feebleness allows.

God then conceives and predestines Christ as the beginning and cause of the many ways, which His almighty wisdom intends, as it were, to travel through in this world (Prov. viii. 22), as the type and foundation of various and innumerable works (1 Cor. iii. 11), as the commencement of an alphabet, the letters of which will suffice to form all the words which a God can employ who speaks (Apoc. i. 8), as the head of an immense body (Coloss. i. 18), as the eldest of a family whose members cannot be counted (Rom. viii. 29).*

* Sumus omnes in Christo . . . . . Nam et novissimus Adam

The only arrangement which seemed fitting to this chief work of a God, the mystery of Christ, was to make it, at the same time, universal. "In truth," says St. Paul (He is the) "image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature, for in Him were all things created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominations, or principalities, or powers" (Coloss. i. 15—17)—that is to say, all the hierarchies; so that Christ is before all, and all things have in Him their stay, their stability, their harmony, their subsistence.

Yet, however, God having conceived and resolved on this design, in the grandeur of His majesty, in the magnificence of His goodness, in the spontaneous liberality of His heart, a formidable question presented itself before Him. Below this Head gifted with infallibility, infallibly faithful, yet possessing perfect freedom, every creature might fall from God, and perish. In fact, without speaking here of the fall of the angels, the first of the human family (I say, the first according to date, and the order of time, but not in the order of excellence), the first Sacrament of Christ, His first precursor and His first prophet, he who was formed entirely after His model, and already full of Him,—who was divinely charged to announce Him, and to transmit Him to all his posterity—Adam, was one day to sin and to fall. He did not continue submissive and obedient to the law, he did not persevere

idcirco nuncupatus est qui naturæ participatione locupletat omnia ad felicitatem et gloriam, sicut primus Adam in corruptionem et ignominiam. In omnibus itaque Verbum habitavit per unum ut, uno constituto Dei Filio in virtute secundum Spiritum sanctitatis, in universam humanitatem dignitas illa redundaret, adeoque per unum ex nobis in nos quoque perveniret illud: "Ego dixi: dii estis et filii Excelsi omnes."—S. Cyrill. Al., lib. i. in Joann.

in truth; he died to the divine life; and as he was the one source whence all good was to flow to his descendants, when he presently dug a hollow in the bed of his streams, breaking a command, which he put himself, by his own fault, out of the power of fulfilling; the divine stream flowed from him no longer. His sin did not deprive him of the natural power he had of giving birth to a posterity, but he could no longer beget them for Heaven. The children of this fallen one would still bear the image of their father, according to the flesh, but they would no longer resemble their father according to the spirit. Of the two lives which God willed them originally to have, they had now no more than one, the inferior life, which was not capable of making them attain to Heaven, their true destiny. Thus, then, they would be at once both living and dead; living according to the order of time, dead in the order of eternity; living for men, dead for God. And as this higher form was precisely that in which God had conceived, willed, and even placed them, at the beginning, now deprived of it, they would be no longer in His eyes what they would have been if He had simply established and maintained them in their order—that is to say, of imperfect beings; they would be now beings ruined, false, mutilated, decapitated, deformed; and in the order of the affections, instead of being but strangers they would be enemies, beings full of contradiction and antipathies, as Saint Paul says, "Children of wrath" (Ephes. ii. 3), beings definitively ruined and lost. This is the perspective which the possible and then the actual weakness of His creatures opened out before God, when He formed this generous design of making His grace universal.

What, then, was His resolution, according to our manner

of speaking? If He still did not consent to retain within Himself this effusion of His own personal life, that He had decreed before all things, would He maintain it at least henceforth in that singular and excellent vessel of the Humanity of His Son, from Whom He wished at first to pour it forth on all creation; or, reserving to Himself the honour of an experiment, the foreseen failure of which only tended to enhance His generosity, would He leave the human race to the consequences of its ungrateful apostacy, contenting Himself for His own glory, with the fidelity of Him, by Whom alone the fidelity of other beings might have a chance of raising them even to Himself, and of pleasing Him? He did not will this at all in presence of the evil response of the world; He did not withdraw His Word from it. Leaving it at first in its fulness in Christ, He continued also to speak this Word by means of Christ, and to make us derive from it its blessed consequences. In one sense, He has even given us more, seeming to become kinder by the very fact that we became wicked. And it is for this reason that the Church, as it were distracted and bewildered by gratitude, exclaims that this fault of Adam, although in itself it is but a great disorder, is "a happy fault," and that this sin committed with an entire consent, may, nevertheless, on account of the consequences that God draws from it, and of the remedies He applies to it, be accounted as a "necessary one."*

What, then, has God said, and what has He done, in

* O certe necessarium Adæ peccatum quod Christi morte deletum est! O felix culpa quæ talem ac tantum meruit habere redemptorem!—Præcon. Pasch. in Sabb. Sancto.

face of this culpable and frightful catastrophe? God, that is to say, the Father and the Son, Whom the Scripture calls "Wisdom," and Whom it manifests to us as occupying the very centre of the Divine Counsels, and assisting officially in the profound deliberations that there take place (Prov. viii. 12), God the Father, and God the Son, have ruled in concert with God the Holy Spirit, that the creation of a God-man having been already determined upon, as the principle and the foundation of all things, also decided, that this creation in reality balanced every evil; that as His eternity looked through all time, and His immensity filled all space, and His simplicity coincided with all the diversities of beings, so His immutability was proof against all accidents, His power against all possibilities, His love against all obstacles; that henceforth, though the entire humanity had been stained by sin, yet the original design of a man-God might be preserved. "In fact," says St. Cyril, "as an able architect, first lays such a foundation, that if the building should fall, the base of it may be saved, and its arrangement being preserved as well as the foundation, all might be built up again; in the same way, the Creator of all things, in laying, even before the creation, this universal foundation, which is Christ, did it in such a manner, that though sin has intervened and brought all things to ruin, yet Christ, Who subsisted in His integrity, should be the rule for the reconstruction and the support of the whole edifice.*

* Necesse est ut accuratius investigemus quo pacto Sapientia Dei ante sæcula nobis præfundata fuerit. Quemadmodum si quis architectus ædificationem incipiens cogitans secum, ut par est, ne domus temporis successu vitium aliquod accipiat eorum quæ domibus accidere solent, firmissimum fundamentum jacet ac veluti radicem

It is not, you understand, that matters could go on henceforth as if sin had never been committed, or as if it were a fact without importance; this is impossible. From the moment that man sinned, there must enter into the original plan modifications, numerous, profound, terrible; but oh! abyss of the wisdom and goodness of God! it is at first, and principally at the heart itself of the design, that these modifications will take place. From the inferior order, which ought in justice exclusively to undergo the consequences of our faults, since the disorder which caused them did not go beyond it, they will be raised up by love, even to the height of the God-man; from the culpable members, they will ascend to the innocent Chief; Christ, the universal Head, will draw them spontaneously to Himself, from all parts of the sinful world. He will freely take upon Himself the debt, the penalty, and truly the sin of all; and then causing to flow into His human sufferings the infinite virtue of the Divinity, He will absorb in the splendid and all-powerful focus of His sanctity, all this darkness, all these scandals, and all their sad consequences.

inconcussam operibus excogitat, ut si vitium fiat, quum principium seu fundamentum salvum sit, aliam rursus, domum ei superstruere possit; eadem ratione omnium Creator Christum salutis nostræ fundamentum etiam ante mundi constitutionem fecit, ut quum per peccatorum labefactari contigerit, in ipso iterum fundemur.—S. Cyrill. Alex. Thesaur. Vid. Thomass. De Incarnat. Verb. lib. i., cap. 20.—Suarez (De Incarnat. Disput. V. Sect. 3) quotes this other passage of this holy doctor: "Præfundatur ante nos Christus, et in ipso nos omnes superædificamur, idque ante mundi initium in præscientiâ Dei; ut cum ordine divino benedictio maledictionem antecesserit, et damnationem in mortem vitæ pollicitatio, servitutem diaboli adoptionis libertas; et possit natura humana, superatis malis quæ interim acciderunt, in pristinam, per gratiam Christi, qui fundavit eam in bonis, dignitatem recurrere."

Do you understand this admirable order, this counsel which remains immutable and triumphant (Psalm xxxii. 11), and this change of the Right Hand of the Most High? (Psalm lxxvi. 11). Jesus Christ, even if there had been no sin, would have been a mediator, but sin intervening, He became more, a Redeemer. For the great and supreme reasons I have stated, He would have taken our human nature, He will take it still, but in a state, subject to suffering, to weakness, to humiliation, and death, being made in the likeness and the condition of sinners. He would have obeyed God, He will obey Him always, but now, "even to death, the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 8). He would have been a king, mild, radiant, peace-giving, adorned with every beauty, beautiful as love itself, having but to show Himself to strike all minds with wonder, and ravish all hearts, and make His empire to be everywhere and by all adored; He will still be a king, but with His title contested, He must gird on His armour, engage in rude combats, and conquer His kingdom inch by inch. He would have been a high priest, glorious and radiant, presiding at a magnificent banquet, and joyously leading the canticle of thanksgiving that all creation would have sung to God; He will now be a victim immolated in a most inauspicious day. He would have been the gift of God, He will now be more, His pardon. He would have been the life of the world, He will now be its resurrection (St. John xi. 24). In a word, He would have been Christ, He will now be Jesus Christ crucified (1 Cor. ii. 2). But there would be all; and by means of this new phase given to the mystery, order shall be restored, life shall have the conquest over death, and grace over sin, and heaven over hell. Peace being made with God, we shall then have access to glory, we shall

drink happiness at its source, the happiness which is truth, the happiness which is justice, the happiness which is love, the happiness, thrice holy, which is God Himself. We shall be God's by participation, as God is God by nature. And it is thus St. Paul tells us: "because in Him it hath well pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, and through Him that He would reconcile all things unto Himself, making peace through the blood of His cross, both as to the things on earth and the things that are in heaven" (Coloss. i. 19). Gratuitously and before all ages, He had at first predestinated us in Him to introduce us by adoption into His eternal Son-ship. We were thus established to praise, through our whole being, the glory of this grace with which He has freely endowed us, in the person of His well-beloved Son; and now we have our redemption through His blood, and the remission of our sins by the unspeakable riches of this grace which has superabounded in us (Ephes. i. 4—8). So that, as we have said in the commencement, with or without sin, before or after our fall, according to God's eternal plan, realised, in spite of all, by His sovereign will, the grace, which makes us Christians, which sanctifies us, which beatifies us, which deifies us, is life eternal in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Such, then, is the Christian life. You now know what it is in itself, and the sanctuary in which it took up its first abode, and the heights whence it derives its source, and the incomprehensible prodigies of love and of goodness through which it comes to us. It is the essential and interior life of God given at first to Christ in perfection, in the adorable mystery of the Incarnation, and afterwards given to all through Christ, in the thrice-blessed mystery of His immolation. It is the living

light which is the light of God Himself, rising here on earth as an aurora full of mercy, on the terrible night of Calvary. It is the intimate life of God pouring itself forth over the creation, through the humble, meek, tender, rent, and pierced heart of Jesus. It is infinite joy shedding its rays through His tears, peace eternal flowing forth in the streams of His blood. In a word, this life is truly Jesus Christ Himself, He Who has said, "I am the Life" (St. John xiv. 16); "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly" (*Ibid.* x. 10); it is He of Whom St. Paul wrote, "to me to live is Christ" (Philip. i. 21); "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20); and in another place, "When Christ shall appear Who is your Life, then you also shall appear with Him in glory" (Coloss. iii. 4).

Before going further, and without regarding yet what this holy Christian life effects in us who are baptised, and in you especially who are not only baptised but consecrated, I ask you to love it, to adore it, and to praise it in the Christ of God, Jesus; love this life for its beauty, for its goodness, for its worth to all men. I have told you with St. Paul, we are created to praise this grace, even before we were created to receive it, though we cannot know that it exists without receiving already its first-fruits. We are its servants and its adorers, before being its possessors. Give it, then, the worship which is its due. You will see what liberty you will enjoy, what will be your calm, with what delight you will be inundated, when going out spiritually from the world, and from yourself, enamoured with God, and thinking only of Jesus Christ, Who is His beauty, His glory, and His gain, you employ yourselves wholly in crying out with St. Paul, "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. ix. 15).

But it is the truth, that from the fulness of Christ this gift flows down to us (St. John i. 16); and it is now in ourselves that we should study its presence, its effects, and its history.

II.

Among so many ravishing pictures which the Holy Scripture presents to us, there is one which, while charming our minds, profoundly touches our hearts; it is that in which the author of the Apocalypse shows us Jesus Christ Himself standing in humility at the door of the heart, saying to it: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man shall hear My voice and open to Me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Apoc. iii. 20). The natural and necessary filling-up of this divine picture is found in the Canticle of Canticles, which, as you all know, is the poem of the thrice holy loves of Jesus, and the exquisite parable of the most sublime mysteries. "The voice of My Beloved knocking," cries out the Spouse, "open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled one, for My head is full of dew, and My locks of the drops of the night" (Cant. v. 2). It is the same One in both passages: it is Jesus; it is impossible to mistake Him; even in the inanimate letter the soul hears the accent of His voice, and this accent is incomparably sweet. Besides, from these drops of rain which fall on Him while He knocks, to this loving and holy supper which He promises, and which concludes all, each word He pronounces is a world of doctrine and of grace.

Now this proposal, so discreet, and, at the same time, so pressing, which Jesus of Himself makes to a creature who is free—this proposal, I say, is the regular preamble

of supernatural justification, and the foundation and the substance of this justification; it is the entry and the dwelling of Jesus in this creature.* When He enters, life enters, and the soul is born of God; and dwelling in us, He unites Himself to us, and becomes personally "our wisdom, our justice, our sanctification, and our redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30).

We may ask how Jesus entered and dwelt in the souls of the just under the old Law, the Word not being yet Incarnate. Their union with Him was doubtless imperfect, and, saved though they were, if they died in the state of grace, yet they were not able to enter Heaven, except in His train with Jesus, and through His merits. St. Peter teaches us that one of the reasons why the most holy soul of Jesus Christ descended into hell—that is to say, in those low and unknown places where these souls awaited Him without either anxiety or pain—was to put, so to speak, the last seal to their justice, by manifesting Himself to them. He says, expressly, that our Lord "preached" to them (1 Pet. iii. 19). But that from the beginning an interior relation with Christ was possible to men; that a union with Christ was necessary, and therefore obligatory on all; that this union was real in the just; and that which precisely made them just, is what no one can either deny or contest.†

First, then, this relation between Christ and the just, under the old Law, was possible. It sufficed for this end,

* Beatus ille cujus pulsat januam Christus. Janua nostra fides, est: per istam januam Christus ingreditur.—S. Ambros. in Psalm. cxviii. serm. 12.

† Antiqui justi ante incarnationem Verbi, in hâc fide Christi et in hâc verâ justitiâ quod est nobis Christus justificati sunt, hoc credentes futurum quod credimus factum.—S. August. de Patientiâ, cap. 21.

that as the Word and the only son of God, our Lord was eternal. But moreover, existing even as Christ, in the divine thought and will, He was on this title, the principle and the foundation of the designs of God on the world, and especially on the human family, and He existed always after a certain way upon earth. He Who is to-day, and will be through all ages, "He was," saith St. Paul, "also yesterday" (Heb. xiii. 8). Where then was He? He was in the supernatural promises; He was in the angels who were wont to convey or to confirm them; He was in the Patriarchs, in their names, in their lives, in their acts, in their faith, in their desires, in their expectation; He was in their marriages, and truly in their loins; He was in all their mysteries, in all their sacrifices, in all their sacraments, in all their rites of worship: in a word, in all their religion, of which He Himself was the substance. He was in the Law, and in all the ancient Scripture; He was in prophecy, and even in history; He was there as the day is in the dawn, as the ear is in the seed, as the infant is in its mother's womb; He was there as the final end, and, consequently, as the reason which determined everything; He was there also under all His titles, but especially under the title of victim, which gave both scope and efficacy to all the rest. And it was very necessary that in a certain manner, He had already fulfilled the functions of a victim, since the Holy Spirit tells us "that He was slain from the beginning of the world" (Apoc. xiii. 8). The relation, then, of Christ with the just of the old Law was quite possible.

But, moreover, this relation was necessary, and therefore of obligation. More or less explicit, according to times and places, there is but one faith that saves us. Before, as after the Incarnation, this faith is "the sub-

stance of things to be hoped for;"* the sum of these realities to be believed, that is to say, to possess here below in their germ, before possessing them on high, in their full fruition, is eternal life. "Now, this life," our Lord says, "is to know God, and Him Whom He has sent, Jesus Christ" (St. John xvii. 3). For all men, whoever they may be, there is but one mediator (1 Tim. ii. 5);† there is but one "name of salvation" given from on high (Acts iv. 12); there is but one gate to the heavenly sheepfold (St. John x. 9), one way to reach the Father (*Ibid.* xiv. 6), one sacrament by which to know Him (St. Matt. xi. 27), one opening by which to reach His heart (St. John xiii. 25); and whether the society of the saints is called by the names of Adam and Eve, of Noah and his children, or the race of Abraham, or the chosen people, or whether it is called the patriarchal family, or the synagogue, or the Church, this society forms but one only body, of which Jesus Christ is the one and only Head (Eph. i. 22; Coloss. i. 18; ii. 10). Hence it follows, that in referring the Divine language of the Spouse, to her whom He calls "His sister, His love, His dove, His undefiled" (Cant. v. 2), the inspired author of the Canticles utters a real prophecy with regard to us

* Est autem fides sperandarum substantia rerum... in hâc testimonium consecuti sunt senes... et hi omnes testimonio fidei probati non acceperunt repromissionem, Deo pro nobis aliquid melius proponente ut non sine nobis consummarentur. Hebr. xi.—St. Thomas says expressly: "Nullus unquam habuit gratiam Spiritûs sancti nisi per fidem Christi explicitam sive implicitam. Per fidem autem Christi pertinet homo ad Novum Testamentum; unde quibuscumque fuit lex gratiæ indita, secundum hoc pertinebant ad Novum Testamentum.—2da P. Quæst. cvi., art. 1 ad 3.

† Sed nec sanctus quis unquam fuerit nisi eum prorsus deducente Christo, nec ipsi Deo ac Patri conjungatur nisi mediante Christo.—S. Cyrill. in Joann. xv., 6.

all, and gives us at the same time a very real history, a history which dates from Adam, and which, ever since, has filled all ages. This point of doctrine touches so nearly the glory of our Divine Master, that we could not pass it over in silence; and besides, from fear of not giving you a sufficient idea of the holy and grand life which is in you, it was necessary to show you that if everything changes in this world, and even if this very life accomodates itself to these inevitable vicissitudes, yet it has continued, and will continue, invariable in its centre and in its depth.

Jesus is then present and living in the gift He comes to bestow.* Grace is like a river, whose source itself follows the stream and forms the wave; it is as a ray, in which the fire which sends it forth passes entirely into it. When God creates, He works, He thinks, He wills, He says the word; it is enough, and all is done (Psalm xxxii. 9). It is thus also when He governs. But now, this is not sufficient. His operation makes men and angels, but He could not make Gods, except by communicating to us His divine substance, and it is to make us really participate in His Godhead (2 St. Peter. i. 4), that Jesus comes personally to dwell in us.†

How does He come? By a thousand means, and under a thousand forms: all is good to Him, and He has all under His hand. Remember that He is the Word. Has not our word, I mean the interior word, which, in our minds, is the first, has it not a thousand forms

* Si fides in nobis, Christus in nobis.—S. August. in Joann. tract., 49. Quo ingreditur aqua, sancti videlicet baptismi, illic diversatur Christus.—S. Cyrill., Al. in Luc. xxii, ap. Mai.

† In cordibus eorum qui ipsum suscipiunt... naturam suam per communicationem et similitudinem sui ad archetypi pulchritudinem depingit.—S. Cyrill., Thesaur.

at His service? Without calling to mind so many signs that it may borrow from the outward world, without mentioning writing, does not the look, the movement of the lips, the gesture of the hand, the expression of the countenance, the whole attitude of the body, even silence itself, does not all this, if I wish it, and sometimes unknown to myself, translate my thought, and has it not the power to make known my heart? Thus, and more so, it is with Jesus, the infinite, all-powerful, and eternal Word. In order to express Himself, He has whole worlds of resources, and there is nothing in creation that may not serve Him for this end. There are signs that translate Him authentically, and pass officially from Him into souls: they are the sacraments, they are also the words of holy preaching. But there are, as well, signs which give notice of His presence and prepare His coming. They are indefinite and innumerable; it is a dawn, it is a setting sun, it is a star-light night, a day of storms; it is a flower by the way-side, it is the singing of a bird, or the flow of water through the grass; it is a friendly shade, or a fruit quenching the thirst; it is the page of a book, a word listened to by chance, and falling from ignorant and careless lips; it is an inward joy, or a great uneasiness of mind, or a great disgust of the world, and of life; it is the ground giving way under our feet, the hand of a friend withdrawn, or turned to icy-coldness, a ruin, or a separation, a sickness, or a death; this is what appears, but the true foundation and centre of all this is Jesus, "Who stands at the door and knocks." He does not yet dwell within, says the Holy Council of Trent, near as He is, but He already begins to act, He bestirs Himself, He presses, He insists.*

*Non adhuc quidem inhabitantis sed tantùm moventis.—Trid. sess. xiv., cap. 4.

For the infant who is baptised, it is the Church which does all; it is in her, and through her, that Jesus speaks, and is present; she is the Bride. It is through her also, that the child hears Jesus, and opens to Him; she is the Mother. From that time, if the preliminaries are not annulled, they are at least much abridged; all goes quick, because all goes right, and straight, and without the shadow of resistance. For one who is grown up, matters are complicated, especially when Jesus, having already come, and having been driven away voluntarily and with violence, offers to return. Who will say how long a time, certain persons force Jesus to keep standing at the door?

But whoever he may be into whose soul Jesus enters, and whatever moment He enters it, it is for him the most solemn and the most precious of moments. In truth, it is only the light of glory which can discover to us the majesty, the beauty, the kindness of this advent of Christ into the human soul, the power He exerts in it, the love He manifests to it. The act of creation is certainly less magnificent, although by its very nature it is exclusively divine; this act ends in only making a creature, but the act of baptism of a creature makes a God,* and this creature who is made a God, came forth from nothing; that which is nothing, makes no resistance, but this created God is drawn from sin—that is to say, from nothingness mingled with existence, from nothingness which is voluntary, active, and armed, of nothingness which says no, and which combats and struggles.

For this reason it is, that Jesus always presents Himself as the Redeemer; it is with the wood of the cross

* Cfr. S. August. Tract. 72 in Joann. et S. Thom.—Summ. 1a 2dæ. Q. cxiii., 9, 10.

that He knocks at the door of our hearts; it is in virtue of His blood, that He enters it. Even if He approaches one newly-born, it is a sinner that He finds, which is the same thing as to say, He comes to one dead, whence it follows that His first act is necessarily to raise it to life. Pardon, resurrection, justification, it is one and the same thing. "Know you not," says St. Paul to Christians, "that all we who are baptised in Christ Jesus are baptised in His death" (Rom. vi. 3). It is the same in a measure with all those laborious baptisms which follow the first, and which penance confers upon us. Each of them is a passover. We pass by it, as the Scripture says, through darkness to light, from death to life, from the empire of Satan to the sweet kingdom of our Heavenly Father (St. John v. 24, Coloss. i. 13); and the first cause of this blessed passage is the redeeming blood of Jesus. St. Paul says, that if our High Priest has entered into the eternal holy of holies, which is the glorious bosom of His Father, it is owing to the blood He has poured forth (Heb. x. 12), "it is by His own blood." It requires nothing less to enable Him to enter here below into the humblest of His creatures. O the grandeur of grace! O happiness of the creature! But especially O goodness of God, and victorious benevolence of love!

Jesus enters when we open the door; we open it, when, believing in Him, we begin to love Him with a sincere and supreme love; and from the moment that He enters, the union is effected. It is a true marriage, and the partial but real accomplishment of what is said of Christ and of the Church (St. Matt. xxii. 2). "The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king, who made a marriage for His Son."* The soul is the Rebecca of this mild and holy

*Anima desponsata Deo, Verbo innubit æterno ac Verbum

Isaac, the Rachel of this heavenly Israel, the Sarah of this divine Tobias. Who will tell us of this union? The unions of the earth are not to be compared with it; and to find any analogy to it, we must refer back to that union of the two natures of Christ, which forms the bond of the Incarnation. It is the whole being of Jesus that espouses the whole soul, and even in reality, the whole man. If the soul gives itself, or at least allows itself to be taken possession of, without reserve, as it happens in the infant when baptised, Jesus pours Himself into it, and fills it; Jesus, the truth and the light; Jesus, charity and grace; Jesus, life and power; Jesus, order, peace, sanctity, and happiness. They are two in one spirit, and form a perfect community. The entire life of the Bridegroom becomes that of the Bride; His states, His mysteries, His titles, His excellences, His virtues, His sufferings, His merits, He gives and delivers them all to her. It is an undivided fortune, of which each party is, in reality, the master or mistress, although the Bride does not make use of it, but in dependence on the Bridegroom. And it is in this precisely that the depth of those words consists: "I will sup with Him and He with me;" they are united so closely, that they become one to the other a communion and a feast; they pass one to the other, and the Gospel says that they abide in one another (St. John vi. 57).

And Jesus is not alone; the second Person of the Holy Trinity, He cannot separate Himself from the Father, Who begat Him, nor from the Holy Spirit, Who proceeds from both; where there is one of these three Divine Persons, there are of necessity all the Three.

illabitur animæ, non in apice, sed in ipso centro fundoque mentis illudque sibi adstringit.—S. Ambros. ap. Corn. a Lap. in Cant. i. 1.

Therefore, our Lord tells us, "If any man love Me, He will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him." My Father, Myself, and Our Love—which is the Holy Spirit—proceeding from Us both, and will make Our abode with him (St. John xiv. 23).

And these Two Who accompany Jesus are not there as simple witnesses of His presence, of His gifts, and of His works. They work with Him, and They give Themselves, as He gives Himself, each according to what is proper to each. Through Jesus, and in Jesus, we enter into relation with One and with the Other; and what is as true as marvellous, in the same relation that They, each of Them, bear to Jesus. I mean to say, that first of all, through Jesus, and in Jesus, we become truly and really sons of God, and we have the same right as He has, to call God our Father. "I ascend to My Father, and to your Father," said He to His disciples on leaving them, "and to My God and your God" (St. John xx. 17). The Father begets Him, and He begets us; He begets Him eternally, He begets us in time; He begets Him by nature, He begets us freely in time, by an act of His own will (St. James i. 18); but you see, that both He and we, are sons. Christ does not espouse below His rank; we could not espouse Him unless we were of His race and of His family. "My sister, My spouse," He says in the Canticles (Cant. iv. 19). The order of His words shows us the order of His requirements. But besides, through Jesus and in Jesus, the Holy Spirit becomes our spirit (Rom. viii. 9—14). Jesus Himself gives Him to us, that having vivified * and guided the Head, He might vivify

* Dare gratiam aut Spiritum sanctum convenit Christo secundum quod est Deus *auctoritative; sed instrumentaliter* convenit

and guide all the members, and that between the members and the Head there might be one and the same Spirit, the Divine Spirit of the Father and the Son. This Spirit had already prepared and formed our happy union with Christ; He was personally mixed up with all those sweet preliminaries of which we have spoken; He was the soul of the arm of Jesus, when Jesus knocked at the door; when Jesus spoke to us, He was the accent of His voice, and again, it was He Who carried its vibration into our heart.* And now He is the bond of this marriage, which has concluded all, and His effort is always to draw these bonds closer, till the union itself becomes consummated in eternity.

Thus, thanks to Jesus, to His life, to His death, the Three Divine Persons dwell truly in us, and with the firm will to remain there always.† Such is the mystery of the life that each of the faithful in the state of grace has in himself, and which is the foundation of Christianity. This, then, is the real and immediate union with God, which, not by an effect of our natural instinct, but in consequence of our predestination to grace, and of the revelation made to us of it, has been the universal, constant, and obstinate dream of the human race, to the degree of becoming its malady, wherever it has only remained its dream.

But, by reason of the habitual residence in the

etiam ei secundum quod est homo, in quantum scilicet ejus humanitas instrumentum fuit divinitatis ejus.—Summ. 3a pars. Q. viii., art. 1, ad 1.

* Trident. sess. xiv., cap. 4.

† Per gratiam tota Trinitas habitat mentem.—Summ. 1a p. Q. xliii. a. 5.—Una est Patris gratia quæ per Filium in Spiritu sancto completur.—S. Athan. ad Scrap. i., 14.

Christian of the Holy Trinity, you understand the dignity with which he is invested, and the inexpressible value he has acquired. His soul is positively a throne, a palace, a city, a kingdom; and because his sovereign is God, it is a true temple. It is an earthly paradise, and even Heaven already. United to His body, it becomes an extension of the Holy Humanity of the Word, and as a secondary humanity which Jesus deigns to unite to His own. It follows, that the mystery of Christ reproduces itself in the soul, as it were, in abridgment. This mystery is its absolute type; in the regular order everything is conformed to it.

But when the Word has taken our Humanity, He has not taken it, He has not more especially left it, in any state whatever; He makes it like to Himself, as far as may be. Who, when he fixes his residence, does not make the place suit his own manner of life and his own tastes? How much more will not the Word adjust and make fit for Himself this living spot of His human existence, which could only serve Him as a dwelling, by becoming a portion of Himself? If His glory had not required it, the unspeakable love He bears to this creature He has espoused, would have compelled Him to embellish and make her all beautiful.

The Bridegroom gives Himself to the Bride, and this is His great gift, but He brings with Him also a fortune and a dowry; and the first use He makes of it is to adorn her to whom He has united Himself. The Word does this; giving Himself at first in person to His Humanity, He enriches It besides with all sorts of presents. He adorns It with the most magnificent attire; He pours forth into It every grace; He endows It with every virtue; He makes It beautiful with the most ex-

cellent qualities; so much so, that below this hypostatic union which makes of It a God, this Man who is called Christ is, as such, in the eyes of all, the most perfect and the most Divine of men. Now, in due proportion, this is what takes place in our justification. Through respect for Himself, and through goodness to us, the Divine Bridegroom gives us His fortune with Himself, our dowry, and makes us a thousand magnificent presents; He makes us perfect as human beings, He puts on us the rich garments of His Divinity.

There is something unspeakable in this active irradiation of God in the creature He inhabits. We call it irradiation, for such is the excellence of these gifts, that although in him who receives them, they are, as I have told you, the created fruit of a free operation on the part of God, yet they emanate in principle, from the very substance of God, and their effect is, according to the Holy Fathers, to impress, and, as it were, engrave them on the soul.* All takes place in the deepest and most inward part of its being, in that interior which we may call indifferently, our summit, or our centre, and which the Holy Gospel declares to be the proper seat of the Kingdom of God (St. Luke xvii. 21).

* Unio cum Deo non aliter in quoquam esse potest quam per Spiritûs sancti participationem inserentis nobis propriam sibi sanctificationem . . . Idcirco transformans in seipsum quodammodo hominum animas, divinam eis similitudinem imprimit et supremæ omnium substantiæ effigiem insculpit.—S. Cyrill., Al. de Trinit., Dial iv.—Formatur in nobis Christus sancto Spiritu nobis quamdam divinam formam per sanctificationem et justitiam indente: sic enim elucet in nobis character substantiæ Dei.—*Id.* In Isai., lib. iv. orat. 2.—Id quod substantialiter est in Deo, accidentaliter fit in animâ participante divinam bonitatem.—Summ. 1a. 2dæ. Q. cx. art. 2, ad 2.

It is there that God acts, because it is there He dwells, and, consequently, it is there that all the glory issues with which it pleases our Heavenly Father to illuminate His child (Psalm xliv. 14). It is as if the Precious Blood present in the cup of the chalice was Itself to polish, to expand, and to gild it within. First of all, God irradiates and works in the essence of the soul; He pours into it that fundamental grace which we call sanctifying, and which, being at once the condition and the effect of His supernatural Presence, becomes in us the title, and, as it were, the passage to his other benefits, and delivers the soul entirely to His operations, at least in right, in power, and in principle. It is by this fundamental grace that God purifies it by blotting out its sins, as the sun at its dawn on the horizon chases away the darkness. It is by this grace that He delivers it, that He pronounces it innocent, that He makes it new, young, candid, open to all His divine influences, and docile to all the impulses of grace. It is by this grace that He lays hold, as it were, of the roots of the soul, and grafting it in Himself, causes it to drink His thrice holy sap, and to become capable of diffusing it through all those magnificent powers by which it spreads abroad, as a tree by its branches. These natural faculties, so numerous, so various, and so admirable, are made divinely perfect by this inward diffusion of grace; each according to its order, its functions, and its end. Each receives new, superior, and essentially supernatural qualities, which give, at the same time, suppleness and energy, tractability and strength, simplicity and love, making the soul more passive under the hand of God, and, at the same time, more active in His service and in the practice of good works. There are, first of all, the

sovereign virtues called theological: faith, hope, and charity. Experience makes us see that the one light of the sun expands itself in several colours, and first in three principal ones. It seems that these three great virtues are the immediate expansion, so to speak, of sanctifying grace. There are, afterwards, the infused virtues, whether intellectual or moral. These are the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which, derived from the three theological virtues, as from their source, put the soul in a state for exercising, after a divine manner, the secondary virtues, and which become the fruitful germs of the flowers which God wishes to gather in us.* Doubtless, the single sacrament of confirmation gives officially the abundance of these holy gifts; but the mere state of grace implies their presence in the soul, and there is not one among the just who does not possess them all, in a greater or less degree.

You see, then, that God, in giving Himself to the soul, restores it to itself. He cures it, He repairs it. It is not that He replaces it entirely in the peaceable and simple state of original justice. It is not even that He establishes it at once in the perfection to which he gives it the power of attaining, while dwelling on this earth. For adorable reasons, in which His justice has its share, but which wisdom and love have especially inspired, the soul, redeemed and deified, is encompassed, while in this world, with extreme misery. Saint Paul teaches that Jesus, in His life on earth, was "compassed about with infirmity, tempted in all things like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. iv. 15., v. 2). By this means, the Apostle hesitates not to add, that our Lord served "his apprentice-

* S. Thom. Summ. 1a 2dæ. Q. lxviii., art. 4 et 8;—*Id. ibid.* 2da 2dæ. Q. xix., art. 9.

ship to obedience, to mercy, and to compassion" (*Ibid.* v. 8). But as for Jesus, this always remained, as it were, without: His flesh might be weak, His soul weighed down, and overwhelmed in its sensitive part; these states were no doubt humiliating and painful, but they remained absolutely free from all moral misery. We cannot say as much of this centre of corruption that we call concupiscence, and which remains always in the lowest depths of the soul, even when God puts a crown on our head, or rather is Himself our crown. Without being in reality a sin, this ignoble covetousness is a brand and an appetite for sin, a foot-mark of the devil, a principle of rebellion, and, as it were, a detestable root which, if it is not cut down or trodden under foot, sends forth from its misshapen stem, poisonous flowers and most deadly fruits.

But in the state in which the soul is put by those living splendours with which its Divine Guest clothes it, as with an armour both defensive and offensive, it may always and easily enough keep this concupiscence within due bounds. Turning, then, its combats into triumphs, it reduces its enemy to be practically an aid in acquiring virtue, and the means of advancing its future glory. Besides, we should remember, that this shameful misery, which exercises us in acquiring perfection, affects not so much the soul itself, or its happiness hereafter, as its temporal life upon earth. The proof of which is, that if an infant dies immediately after its baptism, its soul, pure and without any stain, and free from all debt, enters heaven at once, without any hindrance or delay, and blooms in glory. And it would be the same with every adult who goes out of this world, having preserved without stain the grace of his baptism, or who has recovered its purity, by sufficient penance. St. Paul teaches us, then,

a certain truth when he says that "for those who are in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation" (Rom. viii. 1).

What am I saying? Such is the fulness and the force of the grace of redemption deposited by God in the soul, that without exempting it from the death of the body, which is united to it so closely, and which will pay in the dishonour of the tomb for having served it as a shelter, an arsenal, and too often an accomplice in so many acts of wickedness; such, I say, is the fulness and the force of the grace of redemption, that the soul in quitting the body at death, graves upon it, as it were, a divine impression, and leaves there a perfume of the Holy Spirit which becomes the seed of its resurrection to eternal life (Rom. viii. 11).

You understand now what the Three Divine Persons are doing in the soul, the doors of which, faith has thrown open, and how They dwell in it as Their sanctuary. They say, then, as on the day They created Adam, "Let us make man to Our image and likeness" (Gen. i. 26), and what They say, They effect. They shed, and they sign upon the soul, the light of Their countenance (Psalm iv. 7); They impress themselves not only on us, but in us, and mould us, so to speak, after their eternal model,* and it is thus that They make of us that new and interior man, which is created, St. Paul tells us, in justice and holiness of truth (Ephes. iv. 24) "They bless us in Christ with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places" (Ephes. i. 3); They "baptise us with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (Acts i. 5), that is to say, with love; They consecrate us with that unction which is a communication

* Per Spiritum conformati sumus ad Deum: species autem illa omnium suprema, nimirum Filius, per Spiritum sanctum nobis imprimitur.—S. Cyrill. Alex. Dial. de Trinit. v.

of their essence; They name us with that name which is as "oil poured forth" (Cant. i. 2); They form Christ in us, and form us in Christ (Gal. iv. 19); They make of us true Christs, that is, anointed ones, each Christian becoming a member and an epitome, as it were, of this total and sovereign Christ, Who remains the one object in Whom are centred all delights, the one reason of every gift, the one means of all holy operations. The soul thus plunged in God, participates really in the Divine Perfections, as iron thrown into the fire borrows its nature and qualities. It becomes "light in the Lord" (Ephes. v. 8), charity in the Holy Spirit, power in Him Who is its force (Philipp. iv. 13), greater than the world, and worthy of being its Judge (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3), virginal, royal, sacerdotal, one and universal, Christian and Catholic, in a word, like in all things to that blessed Jesus, Who has become its Life, its Head, its Spirit, and so to speak, His grace personified.

Is this all? By no means. That which seems an end, and an end most sublime, is in fact but the point of departure, and the commencement of ascension (Eccle. xviii. 6). "He Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts," writes St. Paul (2 Cor. iv. 6). Then when the dawn commences, there is made an admirable day, yet it is still but morning; the midday will come afterwards (Prov. iv. 18). As Jesus grew in His personal Humanity here below, He wishes to grow in this soul, to "grow in age, in grace, and in wisdom before God and before man" (St. Luke ii. 52). Therefore, it is that the grace of His coming contains the principle of a two-fold and marvellous progress, the progress of God in the creature, and the progress of the creature in God. If God is truly the Master, if His name is really

sanctified, if His Will is accomplished in the earth of our conduct as in the Heaven of His designs, in the earth which is ourselves, as in the Heaven which is Jesus, God and man will go on penetrating one another more and more, uniting the one to the other always still more, and approaching incessantly that ineffable union of which Jesus, the first Christian, says, "I and my Father are One" (St. John x. 30). "I will dwell in them and walk among them, saith the Lord" (2 Cor. vi. 16),* and the soul, encouraged, replies, "Doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in Him Who is the Head, even Christ" (Ephes. iv. 15). Thus the first state of the soul, already so divine, goes on becoming continually more and more so. "Now the Lord is a Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" that is to say, the power of going on to its end, energetically and without obstacle. "Therefore it is," continues the Apostle, "that we all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18): the same image, because it is perfect and absolutely unalterable; the same image, because it is exposed to the eyes of all, without exception or distinction; the same because it is the image of God.

The condition and the means of this divine transformation are our works. The very condition in which we are now placed becomes a principle of action. Life is given us to live; strength, in order that we may exercise it; seeds are such, that they may germinate. The soul, in the state of grace, is a field full of divine seeds. The Heavenly Adam establishes Himself there as in a paradise of

* In te Deo ampla possessio in quo ambulare se dicit, hoc est laxæ spatia ambulationis inveniens.....Cui mundus angustus est, tu ei ampla domus.—S. Ambros. in Psalm. cxviii.

delight (Prov. viii. 31). He comes there—yes, He Himself, to protect His own property, and to cultivate it (Gen. ii. 15). The first Adam failed in his task; there is no danger that with the second Adam there should be any failure. But He is not alone; He cannot, as a rule, do anything, or, at least, finish anything, alone. The soul, which is His garden, is at the same time His Eve, "His help like unto Himself" (*Ibid.* xviii.). She will not seduce Him, but she can betray Him, and by this means make His labour abortive. This work does not succeed but by the operation of the one, and by the co-operation of the other. They must needs be united in everything; this is the law; their separation is infallibly, sterility and death. Jesus, consecrating and deifying our being, consecrates also in principle, and deifies our works. He is always and essentially a Saviour. Saving first human nature in Himself, then saving human beings; He intends finally to save their life, even in its least actions, their life at every instant. He can make His grace to flow in every direction, and He will do this, as a sap vivifying all that it penetrates, and, wherever it remains, rendering death impossible.

In this human life to which He has descended in His Divine Person, and which He has led so sincerely, so really, with so courageous and patient an exactitude, there has been, or may be found, acts without number, and of an almost infinite diversity. Except those which are bad or irregular, there is not a single one with which His grace is not fully compatible, not a single one among those of our acts which are supernatural (that is a matter of course), but not one, either, of our natural actions—not one of our interior, not one of our exterior actions, not one of those which we do freely—not one of those we are forced to do. The little, the great, the easy, the

difficult, the rare, the habitual, the humble, the common, —everything may serve as a sanctuary, and as an organ, to this holy grace of Christ. So noble is this grace, that instead of becoming profane, or vulgar, it is made the very soul of every trifle, and of the common servitudes of our daily life; it confers on them an unspeakable dignity, and gives them a priceless value. The common multitude of our earthly actions, which in so many respects are so low and homely, it elevates to a divine aristocracy. Yes, the life of that little infant, so feeble, so dull, so made up of nothings; the life of that artisan, so obscure and so insipid; the life of that miserable slave; the life, so contemptible and apparently so useless, of that poor beggar,—if grace is in it, and rules it, it is the Christian life, the life which animated the Soul, the Body, and the works of Christ—the evangelical life, the Catholic life, the life supernatural and eternal, the life of Him who gives life to all things; in a word, it is that life, holy, radiant, and blessed, which is the ineffable life encircling the Divinity, which circles round the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is a truth, which is adorable and incontestable. Man can and ought to be a God, and live even on earth, after the manner of a God; but it suffices for this, that being united to Jesus Christ, he is a man, and leads the life of a man, without being in any way obliged even to have the appearance of a great man.

Such is the Christian life; such is the divine foundation, the unequalled treasure, the distinguished honour, the ravishing beauty, the victorious strength which exists in the soul united to God, in Jesus Christ, by His sanctifying grace. This is what the holy and merciful Trinity grants us, what the Blood of Jesus merits, what Baptism confers, what Confirmation perfects, what the Holy

Eucharist nourishes, what sin destroys, and what penance repairs. Behold the life that Satan envies, what the world is ignorant of, blasphemes, detests, and persecutes. Behold that which after being first of all here below, our justice, our honour, and our sanctity, becomes hereafter our glory and our beatitude.

All, doubtless, do not possess this gift in the same degree; in the spiritual firmament, as in that which is visible, one star differeth from another star in brightness and in glory (1 Cor. xv. 41). This inequality of individuals, whence arises the harmony of the whole, will subsist even in glory; it is plain that it is found already in grace, which is its outline and preparation. "The Spirit breatheth where He will" (St. John iii. 8), says the Gospel, and in consequence He gives to each the measure which it seems good that each should have (1 Cor. xii. 11). But he among us all, who has received from Him the least grace, from the time that he recived the supernatural life, possesses in substance all the blessings of which I have spoken, and doubtless many others, for who can put bounds or limits to "the gift of God?"

In the order of the divine life, and in regard to the last end, this first grace is but a prelude; it makes of the soul a real little infant, and we may say with truth, that, with reference to the fulness of life which constitutes the heavenly state, we always remain, while upon earth, in this state of infancy. But existence in this order at the period of infancy is something infinitely higher than existence in the order of nature, in the state of manhood, even had it alone all natural perfections. It is what the Wise Man alludes to, when he says, "If any one be perfect among the children of men, yet if Thy Wisdom be not with him, he shall be nothing regarded" (Wisd. ix. 6);

and, on the contrary, St. Paul says "that the foolishness of God, in the Divine Order, is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than man" (1 Cor. i. 25).

Finally, it is of consequence never to forget that in this world all these truths are very hidden and concealed from sight. The senses perceive nothing of it; reason itself can hardly discover anything of it—it can never fathom it to the bottom; this is very plain. The question here relates to what is essentially divine; with his mere natural strength man can never master it. As in the Humanity of Christ, as in the Eucharist, as in the Church, as everywhere upon earth, where there is the divine life, the Christian remains a mystery of faith—that is to say, an enigma, a nothing, a folly, very often a scandal, to him who has not faith, and, to those who have it, a trial and an exercise. "My beloved," writes St. John, "therefore the world knoweth not us, because it knew not Him." "Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be." As the seed cast into the earth, we remain profoundly hidden—hidden from others, and often, for our good, most hidden from ourselves. But when Christ shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John. iii. 1—3). "When Christ shall appear," says St. Paul, "Who is your life, then you shall also appear with Him in glory" (Coloss. iii. 4).

Whoever believes and keeps within himself this doctrine, is in the way to comprehend practically the Christian life here below—that is to say, to know its origin, its nature, its law, and its end; and whoever (such is the conclusion of the Apostle and our own)—"whoever has this hope in himself, labours to become holy as Jesus Christ is holy."

ON THE RELIGIOUS STATE.

If there is in any language on earth, a word which is great and mighty, it is that of Religion. The thing it signifies rules over the whole earth. Instinct feels it, reason proves it, and the heart, if it is upright and pure, rejoices that it is so. This thing, whatever it may be besides, is evidently something holy. Among all the matters with which man occupies himself, this is set apart and put in a place of honour. All men on earth, who are enlightened and good, speak of it with respect. It shares with truth and with justice, the privilege of being quoted, invoked, and honoured, even by those who misunderstand it and transgress its laws. No one among them would bear to be accused of having no religion. Being so holy, religion is also a thing altogether necessary, and for the very same reason, quite popular. Among mankind, in their relations with one another, in their mutual affairs, it is always and indispensably understood. It is the life of societies, the support of states, the foundation of families. Therefore, it is in our humanity an incessant preoccupation; it is also an imperious want, which very easily becomes a most ardent passion. All history bears witness to it, and in the order of private facts, into which history does not enter, it is not uncommon to see this need of religion manifest itself suddenly,

as by lightning flashes and claps of thunder, even in those who are given up to thoughtlessness, or who are the slaves of sin. The ancients, then, were not deceived when they defined man: a religious animal. He is religious, as much as he is reasonable, and I think on the same ground, and by the same law. We live on religion as on bread and air.

But what is that religion, which everybody speaks, and of which, especially at this day, many speak without knowledge and without intelligence?

Religion has two aspects. We may consider it in itself, such as God established it, and proposes it to man. We may also regard it in man, inasmuch as being at first a disposition and a want, it becomes to him, by grace and by exercise, an enlightened and praiseworthy habit, that is to say, a virtue.

In itself, religion is the whole assemblage of bonds which attach the creature authentically to his God. If we understand that there are sometimes other bonds besides these, they are so afterwards, by extension or assimilation, and inasmuch as these secondary bonds find in the first their sanction, their rule, and their foundation. Thus what God tells us, and, consequently, what we ought to believe; what God promises us, and, consequently, what we ought to ask, to hope for, and to seek after; what God commands us, and, consequently, what we ought to do—but first to do for Him; the worship with which we ought to honour Him, and the service which we ought to render Him; this is what is meant by religion.

But further, we say, that religion is a virtue. The man who acknowledges, respects, and loves the bonds of nature and of grace which unite him to his Creator; who

fears nothing so much as to see them broken; who, far from dreading them, would much rather increase their number and tighten their hold; the man, in a word, who, in the order of his relations with God, is prompt to believe, strong to hope, fervent to serve,—this man has the virtue of which we are now speaking—he is a religious man.

This virtue is necessary. It is necessary in the sense that the duty which it makes us discharge is a sacred and essential debt, and of which the creditor cannot free the debtor, and thence it comes to be closely allied to the cardinal virtue of justice. It is, in all respects, justice in an eminent degree, and truly that which in this virtue is most excellent and most urgent. God does justice to Himself in exacting it of us, and perfectly as we may satisfy Him on this point, we do nothing more than perform an act of justice.

The virtue of religion is also necessary on another ground. The question then is, how the creature should render to God the honour and the service which is His due; that is, how he should definitively adjust, as far as possible, his sentiments and his conduct to the divine perfections, to the rights and the wills of God. The soul evidently is not practically capable of doing this without having a special power, a particular and a superior faculty—in a word, what we are accustomed to call virtue.

In order that this virtue should have besides an efficacious action, that is to say, that it should attain its end, and profit him who performs its acts, the truth must clearly precede, enlighten, and direct him. If the God whom he pretends to honour is not the true God, or if the worship with which he honours even the true God is

not the one which He demands, it is clear that it is a vain worship. It does not honour the divinity; it does not sanctify man.

With Christians there is no such evil to fear. We have before us, under our eyes, in our hands, a substantial religion which is authentic, infallible, and complete. We possess in its purity religious truth, that is to say, the living truth, to Whom worship is due of right, and also the normal worship, which, as truth, God wishes to receive. And, at the same time, we have in us a principle of religious virtue, of adoration, of pious love, and of consecrated service, which, being equivalent to its object and inexhaustible, makes us more than equal to accomplish, in this regard, our duties.

This substance of religion—this religion objective and complete, which God proposes to us, or rather, imposes on us—is personally Jesus Christ. After what we have already said in our instructions on grace, this need not surprise us. Religion in itself, we said, is the assemblage of all the bonds which attach the creature authoritatively to God. Now, Jesus Christ, you have seen, is the bond which unites fully and indissolubly God to the creature. He is the integral Word by which God reveals Himself to us; the light of reason as the Word Creator; the substance of faith as the Word Incarnate. He is the foundation and the reality of the promises; He accomplishes all those that are passed; He is the guarantee and the pledge of those that are yet to come (2. Cor. i. 20); He is the law; all supernatural, and even natural morality, reduces itself to the one truth "to follow Him," that is to say, we are to obey Him, to love Him, and imitate Him, and when we follow Him, even to the end, we are not only just and good, we are holy and

truly perfect, as the Heavenly Father is perfect (St. Matt. v. 48). He is alike the worship, the praise, the prayer, the temple, the priest, the victim, and the whole sacrifice. He is so, from the beginning of the world. He will be so, even to the end, and in Heaven, when time shall be no more, He will be so still. Thus, you see, our religion, and consequently, religion itself, is Jesus Himself, and Himself alone.

But besides this, by an admirable arrangement, and which is naturally derived from our fundamental doctrines, this same Jesus Who presents Himself before us as our Head, the substance and the body of religion, He is also in us by His Spirit, as the principle of religious virtue. He is personally and immediately the source of that power, of those dispositions, of those operations, which enable us to discharge before God the first debt which His justice demands of us; that is, the debt of His worship in all its forms. As all supernatural virtue (and by reason of the object to which it corresponds, it is pre-eminently supernatural), so the virtue of religion can only be born of grace, and this grace is the supernatural presence and action of the Holy Spirit, which produces it in the soul. Now, this Spirit, you know, proceeds from Jesus; at first in God, then also in us, when It is there; for It is Jesus, Who, having merited It for us on the cross, sends It to us from the height of His glory; it is as the Spirit of Jesus that He descends and resides in our hearts, and it is He Who in particular makes us utter this cry, "Abba! Father!" (Rom. viii. 45); which is the summary of all piety, I mean of religion, in its perfection and in its beauty. Whence you see that here, as everywhere, Jesus is the Alpha and Omega; the principle from which all proceeds, and the end to which all tends.

Whether what is without, or what is within, all comes from Him, all goes to Him, all reposes in Him; He is the sum of all, and, in a word, as St. Paul tells us, "He truly fills all things, and is Himself all in all (Ephes. iv. 10).

From the moment that they possess within them the personal spirit of Jesus (and they have that Spirit when they are in the state of grace), Christians are religious. They are so, inasmuch as they are just and holy, as they are judges, kings, priests, and victims (1 Peter ii. 9). For such is the unity of this marvellous Body of Christ, of which infinite love is the soul, that there is not a single member who, in a certain sense and measure, does not participate in all its life and happiness.

But does this fundamental and holy community of spirit establish among these members a perfect equality? Is it on the same ground, and in the same degree, that all Christians bear before God these sacred names, and do they possess on that account the sublime realities that they express? And if it is clear that it is not so, is this inequality caused by the greater or less perfection in the dispositions of each individual, and of his greater or less correspondence with a grace, which, in itself, would be alike for all? No, most certainly, no. This difference of dispositions clearly effects the spiritual inequality found among Christians, but it is neither its only nor its principal cause. The sovereign Will of God holds here the first place, and plays the principal part. As God wishes that in His family certain blessings should be in common, it is His pleasure also, that other blessings should be reserved, and though He wishes that these divine privileges should profit a community created to enjoy them, and should flow back upon it in streams of

glory and of beneficence, yet, in themselves, they are special privileges; and if men invested with them seem to be taken from the crowd, they are, in a marked way, put aside from it, honoured with a particular grace, and installed in a special rank. The crowd gives these chosen ones to God, Who gives them back again to the crowd; but they are truly chosen ones.

It follows from this, that as over and above this elementary royalty and priesthood which are conferred by baptism, there are yet, here on earth, and by the express order of God, royalties and priesthoods superior and more official; so, besides this fundamental religion, which is the vital breath of every soul in the state of grace, there is a religion more elevated, more particular, and more perfect —in a word, as there is here below a sacerdotal state and a royal state, there is also a Religious State.

You are indebted to the signal mercy of God that this sublime state is yours; we are now about to speak to you of it. It enters into our plan to treat of it immediately after the Christian life. It evidently supposes it, but it adds something to it; at least, it is one of those exquisite perfections of the divine life, which the order established by God does not suffer to be manifested in all men and everywhere. You would not have understood the holy state of religion if this life of grace, which is its root and sap, had not been first explained to you. But this foundation laid and made clear, the knowledge of your state is your proper foundation. It is the principle which ought to regulate your existence, and to give to it its character; for your whole conduct ought to have this characteristic. The religious state not only imposes on you certain virtues and special good works, but further, there is nothing in your moral life which is not marked with a

distinct sign, and does not give forth its light with a special brightness. In brief, this state is, here below, the most certain, and, in many respects, the most complete form of God's eternal designs upon you. This is the reason why it is of supreme importance for you to know it well, and for ourselves a great obligation to make it quite clear to you.

Having thus spoken to you in the first place of the origin and the reason of the different states which are in the Church, I should like to show you how it is that God calls us to this or that state, and thus to enlighten you on that great and delicate question, the religious vocation. I should wish to show you, in the second place, what constitutes precisely the state in which this holy vocation enlists us; its nature, its characteristics, its divine obligations, and consequently, the duties to which you subscribe, in embracing it. After which, to conclude all, I must speak to you of some of the numerous and marvellous fruits of this blessed state, and of the nameless treasures which are found in it.

I.

When God looks on His Divine Son, Christ, He sees the entire world. Christ, in the thought of God, is the universal concert and absolute harmony of all things. It is evident, that being as the Word, the essential, one, and infinite thought of the Father, He becomes in His Incarnation, and by the same nature in which He is incarnate, the grand expression and summary of all the thoughts of God. By the sole fact that He is hypostatically united to a Divine Person, and that He alone is raised to this sublime union, His borrowed Being becomes naturally His *principal* Being. Now, this is the same thing as to say, that whatever may be the

different creations which exist outside of Him, they are all subordinate to Him, He rules them, and to use the words of St. Paul, He "re-establishes them" in Himself (Ephes. i. 10).* It is not in this, doubtless, that the principal grandeur of Jesus Christ consisted, for whatever may be the splendour of His glory, it pales before His existence as "the Only-begotten Son of the Father" (St. John i. 18). The works are marvellous: gathered together in one, they appear still more beautiful; yet an infinite distance separates these works from the Workman. No one knows this as Jesus knows it, and if it were given you to perceive on high, His human attitude, you would see that before God He not only humbles, but annihilates Himself. Nevertheless, you understand, the universality of this existence remains in itself an immense greatness. We have a right to call it the supreme greatness, since it is not surpassed, except by God, and God, being Infinite, is beyond all measure, and therefore it is not a greatness of which we can properly speak.

This greatness is in Christ, from the moment He exists as such, in the Divine thought. It is, in the thought of God, also complete, independently of all the consequences of the Incarnation in the rest of creatures, in such a manner, that in itself God cannot increase it. But He may display and communicate it. No irradiation can increase the splendour of this fire, yet God can will that this fire should send forth its rays, and to make room for them, create vast atmospheres. Innumerable and learned commentaries would not suffice to make known this incomparable text; God can nevertheless order that this text should have its comment. And such is, in reality, the system in which God resolves to act; doubtless

* The literal translation of the Greek text.

through love of us, for in this order consists our glory and beatitude, but principally through love of His Son Jesus, and in order the more to pay Him honour. Christ will then not only have a universality of origin, of eminence, and of right; He will expand in reality, beyond and outside Himself, and will fill the universe. In this consists, as you have seen, the mystery of His mystical Body, or of the holy Church. As Christ manifests God, the Church manifests Christ. Only, as the light, which is one, becomes multiform in its appearances when the prism transmits it to our eyes, so what in God is absolutely one, appears manifold in Jesus; and much more: what is one and condensed in Jesus, appears divided and dispersed in the Church.* The humanity of Christ is the prism of God, the Church is the prism of Christ. Hence, the great and marvellous diversity in it, of graces, of gifts, of vocations, of missions, of states, of ministries, of which St. Paul speaks, in his epistles (1 Cor. xii.—Ephes. iv).

This diversity is the beauty of the Church. The Church, the master-work, the mirror, the perfection of the beauty of Christ, is essentially and perfectly beautiful. Now beauty, order, harmony, variety, flourishing freely in an inviolable unity, is one and the same thing.

This prodigious diversity, making the Church beautiful, renders it also strong. "Thou art beautiful, My love," says the Beloved to His Spouse; "sweet and comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army set in array" (Cant. vi. 3). It is indispensable, in fact, that the Church should be

* Civitatem carnem quam assumpsit nuncupat, quia ut civitas ex varietate et multitudine consistit cohabitantium, ita in eo per naturam suscepti corporis quædam universi generis humani congregatio continetur.—S. Hilar. in Psalm. li. Cfr. in Matth. Can. iv.

strong; assuredly to defend herself, since sin has raised up against her many enemies, and obliges her to go to war; but in all cases, and principally, in order that she may labour as God wishes her to labour. For, according to the law laid down from the beginning, the Bride is something more than the image, the ornament, and the joy of the Bridegroom; she is His help like unto Himself (Gen. ii. 18). Man is by right a labourer; the heavenly Adam, more so than the earthly Adam. The heavenly Adam has a work to do; He wishes to be helped in it. Doubtless His first aid here is His first Spouse—that is to say, His Personal Humanity. But entering by an increase of grace into the mystery of these divine nuptials, the Church, His other Humanity, and His second Spouse, necessarily takes part in His labours. She is His official associate and fellow-worker; and even now that He has ascended into heaven, and Jesus works only within, and in an invisible manner, it is on her that externally all the labour devolves. Now, without the division, the distribution, and the hierarchy of work, she would not be sufficient for this labour. Nothing social here below would succeed without that division and that hierarchy: so we do not find a single society which dispenses with it.*

You see, then, in order both to manifest Christ and to continue His work in this world, the Church has need of an immense variety of states, of powers, of functions; and

* Sicut in rerum naturalium ordine perfectio quæ in Deo simpliciter et uniformiter invenitur, in universitate creaturarum inveniri non potuit nisi difformiter et multipliciter: ita etiam plenitudo gratiæ quæ in Christo sicut in capite adunatur, ad membra ejus diversimode redundat—1. Ad hoc quod corpus Ecclesiæ sit perfectum. 2. Diversitas statuum et officiorum pertinet ad necessitatem actionum quæ sunt in Ecclesiâ necessariæ. 3. Ad dignitatem et pulchritudinem ejus.—S. Thom. 2da 2dæ. Quæst. clxxxiii., art 2.

this manner, it is of faith* that she possesses. In the light of prophecy, David beheld this Church when he sang, "The queen stood on Thy right hand in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety." Ps. xliv. 10.

Do we mean then to say, that in thus diversifying herself in her members, the Church manifests Jesus Christ entirely, and continues absolutely all that He has done in the world? We do not think so, nor does it seem to us possible. In the same way that the Holy Humanity does not equal God, though it manifests Him in so perfect a manner, so the Church, which manifests Christ in so excellent a manner, is not equal to Christ. Except God, no one can ever know what is in Jesus, and what He can produce. "I am the beginning" (St. John viii. 25), said He; and so much is He so, that all becomes "beginning" in Him. His states, though transitory, are types. His least functions are centres; all His graces are sources. There is not a single mystery of His interior or exterior life, not a single act, not one of His ministries, not one of His titles, which, contemplated apart, may not, thanks to the virtue which is in them, become the sun of an entire system and the centre of a special world, having its particular aspect, and influence, and movement, in that universal system, of which Himself, as the Word Incarnate, is personally the law, the reason, and the example. It was of the discourses and of the historic acts of Jesus, that St. John was able, and was obliged, to write, that if they were related in detail, "the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written" (St. John xxi. 25). What likelihood, then, is there, that one place, that one period, that one Church,

* V. Suarez, De Virtute et Statu Religionis, Tract. iii., lib. i., cap. 2.

that one creation whatever, could suffice for the complete development of these innumerable germs that the Divinity accumulates in Jesus, for this reason only, that the Word is His own Person.

However, if the Church does not manifest Him completely, and does not continue all that He has done on earth, it perpetuates at least what is essential in His work, and manifests Him in magnificent proportions. God rules all this in His wisdom, of which no one among us knows the secret depths, and also, in a great degree, according to the needs that He knows we have, and which His goodness prompts Him to satisfy. As in a building, there are principal layers and beams, and as in a tree there are large and strong branches, and in the human body vital organs and arteries, which carry to every part life with the blood; in the same way, there are in Christ fundamental realities, which, in our regard, are more general types corresponding to categories more elevated, to a higher order of beings, to necessities more pressing, to services more important. This is the reason, the stay, and truly the sap of the principal Christian states and conditions in the Church.

These states are modes of living which are authentic, official, regular, and permanent.* They also affect the condition of those who embrace them, placing them with the Holy Trinity, with Jesus, with Mary, with the Church, in settled and fixed relations of dependence. All are holy, but not in the same degree; and in each of these states there may be as many degrees of sanctity as there are ranks of individuals; further, all are sources of operations glorious to God, useful to the Church, and therefore to the world. If these operations are regular,

* Confr. S. Thom. 2da 2dæ. Quæst. clxxxiii.

if especially they serve the public good, and are connected with an actual institution, they take the character of offices and ministries; but many of them are peculiar to the individual, springing from his personal and intimate relations with God, such as the state in which this individual himself is placed, supposes them to be, or makes them possible; and then, however great they may be, they are still private services. We understand, that in all this, there is a variety almost infinite and a number of inequalities. But they all rest in those states of life, as the stems which bear the fruit, rest on the branches. These states in their turn, rest on the general and fundamental state of Christians, as the branches rest on the trunk; and, in a word, as the trunk is supported by the root, so this Christian state which bears all the rest, and in their substance, has its stay and support in Jesus Christ.

You know the name of these principal states in which the Christian's commonwealth spreads itself over the earth. It is, first, in the order of laics, the holy state of marriage, and the higher state, of virginity or of widowhood, embraced by vow, even without quitting the world. There is, above the order of laics, the holy Religious State, with its thousand forms and its thousand functions. There is, lastly, the ecclesiatical state, with its hierarchy, and all its Divine ministries. In these states, without exception, all comes from Christ; all have in Christ their principle, their law, and their model; all derive from Him their proper grace, borrow from Him their beauty, their excellence, their fecundity; all manifest Him, propagate Him, and serve Him, and in serving Him, they serve the Church and the entire creation.

These states, then, are, as it were, the framework which

sketches out in their harmony the plan of Jesus Christ on this earth—of Him Who is "all in all." Now its framework, you understand, God does not leave void; this framework, these states, God divides among men, and thus destines to each his vocation. As God, Who is the ideal, is at the same time the absolute reality, all the Divine theories are practical; so that this one and immense design of Christ in His Church, translating itself at first by designs which are very general, ends necessarily in those which are individual and special. When God made for Adam the terrestrial paradise, He did not trace out only the general order of things; He did not content Himself with establishing its great and leading divisions; He planted in it each tree, He sowed in it each flower, giving to each plant its own nature, determining its particular function, assigning to each its proper place. The order and beauty of the garden was precisely that each individual thing was there, where the Divine Ordainer had arranged and decided that it should and ought to be. Now, it is thus in the garden of the Heavenly Adam; but the plants of the former paradise were for him who was to inhabit it, being the decorations of his place of temporary sojourn; whereas the plants of the heavenly paradise are the living members of the Divine Lord Who dwells in them for ever.

You understand, then, this matter, which is of great importance. In the thought and in the will of God, we are, each in His share, a word in this language, a verse of this poem, a note in this harmony, a stone in this temple, a star in this firmament, a feature of this image, a citizen of this city, a member of this body, which is Jesus Christ. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," says St. Paul, "Who hath blessed us with

[illegible] spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, as He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in His sight in charity, Who has predestinated us unto the adoption of children, through Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the purpose of His Will, unto the praise of the glory of His grace, in which He has graced us in His beloved Son (Ephes. i. 3—6), that we may become a living and immortal manifestation of the supreme and adorable mystery which invests Jesus gratuitously, and all us in Him, with the Godhead.

The act which created us, and that which formed us; the numberless acts which follow, and by means of which God leads us to our last end; those supports, those preservations, those lights, those graces, those infinite helps, are only the effects, and as it were, the irradiations of that first act, by which God places us, freely and gratuitously, in His Son. These are the divine messengers coming to tell us the secret thoughts of God in our regard, as the good angels sometimes officially tell us themselves. These are the heavenly labourers charged by Him to reconcile us to His designs. They are, as it were, the movements of those Hands full of intelligence of which the Psalmist speaks, and in which are our destinies (Psalm xxx. 16); Hands of Him Who said, "My Father worketh until now, and I work" (St. John v. 17). Of those beneficent operations, we may say, that they are the waters of that same stream which does not cease to flow over us, and in us, since our conception in our mothers' womb, even to our consummation in the bosom of our Father in Heaven; that stream of truth, of love, and of sanctity, which carries and impels us on to that Ocean, whence it spontaneously

came forth. Now the source of this stream is our predestination in Christ.

Our vocation has there its origin, and I do not know anything which, while it gives you a higher and truer idea of it, can inspire you with a more profound respect for this great gift of God. "Those whom God has predestinated," saith St. Paul, "He hath also called" (Rom. i. 4, and viii. 29). Thus, that which predestination has determined in our regard, our vocation declares and makes known to us; and, in reality, these are not so much, different acts, as two forms, and, so to speak, two phases of the same act; having nearly the same relation one to the other, as the law and its promulgation. In the sense, then, and in the same measure, in which each one is predestinated, each one is also called.

But beware of any error on this subject. There are three vocations, which ordinarily manifest to us the eternal design of God in our regard.

The first regards our state as Christians. God wishes the salvation of all men (1 Tim. ii. 4); and "there is but one Name given to men whereby they must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). God calls all men to the knowledge, the love, and the participation of this living and life-giving Name, which is the Name of Jesus. Here is the first, fundamental, universal vocation of all men. Every one, without exception of time, of place, of race, of condition, has this divine vocation to be a saint, to be holy, of which St. Paul speaks so often (Rom. i. 7). The graces which dispose mankind to correspond to this vocation are certainly not the same for all; but all have sufficient grace, and there is nothing but sin which keeps the soul out of Christ, and causes it to miss its glorious destiny.

The second vocation regards the degree of sanctity which souls united to Christ ought one day to reach. In fact, it is manifest that, among Christians, all do not attain the same level of moral perfection. Now this level, whatever it may be, God clearly foresees; it is equally certain that He has willed it, determining it beforehand by one of those transcendent acts of which He holds the secret in Himself; an act which, far from doing violence to our freedom, implies that we are free, maintains in us the exercise of that freedom, and affects all its movements. In the same way that there is a vocation the effect of which is to plant us in Christ, so to speak, so there is a vocation whose end is to make us flourish in Him, and bring forth more or less fruit; only, in as much as the word of this first vocation is clear, so the word of this second vocation is hardly audible. God pronounces its syllables successively, slowly, and very often in a whisper. In truth, God does not finish pronouncing it in this world: it is a word which lasts always, and which influences the entire life. God pronounces it, to make us ascend; and He intends that we should keep ascending, to our last sigh. It is, as it were, an incessant sowing, which, if the seed springs up here below, it blooms and ripens only in Heaven. God's proceeding in this, as in other respects also, is admirably kind and wise; for who knows if, by pronouncing too soon or entirely this word of our heavenly vocation, God would not often discourage our weakness or sometimes encourage our tepidity, without speaking of the risks to which our humility might be thus exposed?

Finally, there is a vocation to a particular state, which is the vocation with which especially we have now to deal. It holds a middle place between the two of which we

have spoken. It touches the first, in which it has its roots; it develops it, illustrates, and makes it fruitful; and this has the effect of rendering it more solid, and assuring its perseverance. Thus, it serves directly and effectually the second; generally also, the particular state, in which God wishes that we should live, concerns it essentially, as it is a principal means, at least of our attaining the degree of sanctity, which has been destined for us.

Every man who comes into the world has this triple vocation, of becoming a Christian, and of being holy, which is one and the same thing; of being so in such or such a degree, and finally of attaining his rank in the Church triumphant, by embracing such or such a state in the Church militant.

Too often we have but a vague and feeble faith in all this. We believe indeed easily in the vocation which every one has to become a Christian. But as to that vocation which regards the particular state of life, whether it be the heavenly or the earthly, as it is a more secret, and especially a personal matter, the greater number of Christians do not believe it, or at least they act as if they did not believe it. Whence comes this incredulity, which has such sad consequences? It is because the ideas we have of God begin by being so low and gross, and end by becoming entirely false. Is God, whose Being surpasses in its immensity all our conceptions, to be thus imprisoned in our own pitiful and paltry notions? Do details distract or overwhelm Him? St. Peter says that with Him "a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years" (2 Peter iii. 8); and in the same way a single soul is to Him as a whole people, and a whole people as a single soul. You have created us one by one, and You govern us also individually,

one by one* (Psalm xxxii. 15). You think of, You love each one of us, as if he was the only creature You had made. The Holy Scripture tells us everything, when it says that before You, in Your sight, each of us has his name. The stars have their names (Psalm cxlvi. 4); we have ours also. And before You put Yourself at the head of Your cherished sheep, as it pleases You to call us, O Eternal Shepherd; before You took flesh to show them the way, even before leading them forth out of that blessed fold, which is the sanctuary of Your thoughts, and of Your adorable Wills; before bringing them forth and putting them on the way, You call each of Your sheep, one by one, and each by its proper name. "The Good Shepherd," You say, "calleth His own sheep by name, and when He has let out His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him, because they know His voice" (St. John x. 3).

Each one has his vocation, and how, then, without any other consideration, can you fail to see in this an incomparable grace, a marvellous certainty, and a priceless advantage? We pass our life in seeking a position for ourselves, obtaining connections, in suiting the capabilities of all surrounding things to our own interests, to our own tastes, to our own character. It is a problem by no means easy. In reality, God alone knows the solution. He alone knows our hearts; He alone sees and foresees the series of events, prosperous or adverse, which cross our path, according as we embark in such or such a career. He alone has the secret of our particular end. Now, this end becomes of necessity our law on earth, and ought to regulate all our conduct; on it depend both the perfection of our being, and the peace of our life; for everything is of

* Which made David say in another place, "For Thou, O Lord, singularly has settled me in hope" (Psalm iv. 10).

necessity in this matter; and how will the order, and consequently, the happiness, of our present life be ensured by sowing, in advance, disorder in our future life? Have we two lives, that we may make the one flourish, by uprooting the other? We have not two lives, but two states in one life. The question for us, then, in this life, is, to adapt ourselves to an ideal almost entirely unknown. Where is the means of doing this, if God does not help us? Now the truth is, that He Himself goes before us in this matter, and proposes Himself to us as our Guide, and He does so by our vocation. Our vocation is the guiding star, which He causes to shine over our heads; it is the pillar of a cloud and of fire, which by His order always goes before us. It is His own Hand—His Hand, radiant and loving, which traces out the road to our faith, and serves as a centre to our love. It is the condition, the manner, and the prelude of the distribution of heavenly blessings. He called His servants, says the Gospel, and delivered to them His goods, saying to them, "Trade till I come" (St. Luke xix. 13). It is the Sacrament of His sovereignity, of His power, of His wisdom, and of His love, so far as these Divine attributes deign to regard us, and to interest themselves in our humble humanity. It is the seal of infinite truth, of infinite beauty, and of infinite goodness, coming to impress itself on our being. The infallible seed of our perfection, the element of our celestial beauty, the substance of our beatitude, and it is so whatever it may be besides; it is so, whatever else it may tell us; it is so, in what ever position it may place us.

Doubtless God is quite free in thus calling us. Who is free if not a Creator? Is it for the clay to say to the potter, Why hast thou made me thus? If it could

speak, would it not be more pardonable for the clay to speak thus to the potter (Rom. ix. 20), than for us thus to address our Creator? But does this liberty of God ever become a caprice? Can it be an abuse of power, or cause any one the least harm? Does not God, by simply opening His hand, fill with benediction every living thing? (Ps. cxliv. 16). What does it matter whether this Hand makes an archangel or a seraph? It is indeed better for the archangel not to be a seraph, though a seraph is superior to an archangel. It is everything for the creature to be in his proper place in God's creation, because by being so, he is in harmony with all the rest; for in this consists his beauty, his utility, his happiness. Now, it is our vocation which makes known to us this place, and it is the vocation persevered in, which helps to preserve this universal harmony. Who does not clearly see, that as this special call is, on the part of God, an act of immense goodness, so it is, on the part of man, not only an ingratitude, but an inexplicable imprudence, and truly a folly, to make no inquiry about it, or not to follow it, after having ascertained what it is.

If this is true as to any sort of vocation, how much more so is it true with regard to that which fixes us in the state which is most excellent, and especially in the state of Religion! Oh, what a grace! Every grace comes from the Heart of God: thus the least grace is of a measureless value; but that of a religious vocation comes assuredly from that region of His Heart which is most holy and most loving. It is an exquisite gift, in which all the Divine Perfections are more fully displayed, and on which Infinite love reposes with greater delight. And as, in consequence of sin, all grace is the price of, and as it were, wrung, from the Blood of Jesus; and as, where

justice regulates all, it is a strict necessity that what is of greater worth should be paid for at a dearer rate, it is clear, that coming down from the highest point of the Divinity, this grace of a religious vocation must spring forth from the lowest and the most painful depths of the Passion of Jesus Christ. It is not in the spirit of revolt, nor even of contention, that we should reply to this holy, to this merciful, to this beatifying call. Resignation is not a suitable answer to it; and if it is true, that in His humble and charitable condescension, God is content with it, man ought never to be so contented. It is on bended knees, our forehead in the dust, with the heart inflamed and full of fervour, that we must receive the first intimation of so beneficent a will. All the other rights God has over us, should keep silence before it; it is sufficient to oblige, to decide, to impel us, that an unspeakable love has given us this vocation. This ought to be for man the most imperative of laws, and the most irresistible of motives. You have only to reflect upon this truth, to be compelled to assent to it.

Well, there is not perhaps a single point in His relations with us, in which God has more need to protect Himself against us. From the time that He resolved to draw certain souls from what the Holy Scripture calls so well "the dunghill" (Ps. cxii. 7), by which we should understand, not only the filth of sin, but the straw of a worldly life; from the time that, drawing them from it, He decreed to place them officially among the princes of His people, it was necessary that God should put His design in the centre of a real citadel, should arm this citadel for war, and should accept, that out of a hundred times in which He should declare His Will, it should be for Him, in ninety-nine cases, the occasion of sustaining

a siege; a siege against the flesh, against blood, against the spirit of the world; a siege against those who surround the elect in the world; a siege sometimes against the elect one himself. The Gospel is full of those fiery words by which God defends the liberty of His choice, and the sovereignty of His calls. Thus He Himself, being but twelve years old, was found by His sorrowing parents, after three days of anxious search, in the Temple. He replied to His Holy Mother, "How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (St. Luke, ii. 49); and in the same sense are those divine sentences to be understood when He said, "And call none your father upon earth, for One is your Father Who is in Heaven (St. Matt. xxiii. 9); neither be ye called master, for One is your Master, Christ." "So likewise, every one of you that doth not renounce all that He possesseth, cannot be My disciple" (St. Luke xiv. 33). "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me" (St. Matt. x. 37). You tell Me that your father is dead, and you ask Me to go first and bury him. "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their dead" (St. Matt. viii. 21). "No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God" (St. Luke ix. 62). "If thy right eye scandalise thee, pluck it out; if thy right hand scandalise thee, cut it off" (St. Matt. v. 29). "Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth: I came not to send peace, but the sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law" (St. Matt. x. 34, 35), "and blessed is he that shall not be scandalised in Me" (St. Matt. xi. 6).

I told you that religious vocations find their origin in

the lowest depths of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross: going forth from the cross, they are full of its sap, they exhale its perfume, they produce its fruits. It is clear, then, that as the cross itself, being for the truly faithful, a strength and a divine virtue, they are a scandal to the Jews, and a folly to the Gentiles (1 Cor. i. 23). I mean to say, they are so to those of the baptised, who, in spite of their baptism, remain carnal as the Jews, and vain in their mind as the Gentiles. The fact is, that the human history of religious vocations is one of the clearest, and therefore, also, the most frightful revelations of the blindness to which sin has reduced our nature, and of the malice, the impiety, the cruelty, and the secret hatred of God, which are the foundations of the spirit of the world.

Besides, in protecting so solemnly His personal sovereignty, it is also our liberty that God affirms and defends; and there is nothing in this which is excessive. God rules, then, that there is no power on earth, which should hinder or clog a vocation to religion, neither the Church, nor the domestic, nor the civil power. * The ways which lead men to God are absolutely inviolable. Doubtless, certain interests, whether civil or ecclesiastical, may sometimes and lawfully retard the entrance into Religion of one whom God calls to it; but if there is a question of anything else beyond a delay, for Christian reasons, either he who is thought to be called, is not so, or else those who oppose his vocation perform an action which is culpable and detestable. All theologians are agreed on this point, and what more can be stated, than is said by the holy Council of Trent, which, pronouncing an anathema, first, on every one

* Non tenentur nec servi dominis, nec filii parentibus obedire de matrimonio contrahendo vel virginitate servanda.—S. Thomas, Summ. 2da 2dæ. Quæst. civ., art. 8.

compelling a virgin, a widow, or any other female whatsoever, to enter a convent, and there to make her profession, denounces with a like anathema all those who, without a just cause, should hinder a virgin, or any other woman, from taking the veil and binding herself by vows, if such was God's holy will.* The world, even the Christian world, hardly knows now of this formidable penalty. Alas, even when they know it, some do not give much heed to it: contemporaneous history proves that God remembers and keeps to His own words.

And yet it is a wonderful, and indeed, an adorable fact, that the vocation to religion, though it comes from the very height of Heaven, though Jesus paid so dear a price for it in His blessed passion, though it reveals so great a love, though it contains so many and such great graces, though its importance is so vast, both for the soul to whom God gives it, and also for the Church, because of the many blessings it brings to others; whatever may be also the fault, or even the crime of those who unjustly put any hindrance in its way, yet the vocation to the religious state of itself does not oblige as a law; so that in neglecting it, or in refusing it, a sin is committed, especially a mortal sin.† The vocation to follow the Evangelical counsels borrows something from these counsels themselves. Where God counsels, He does not command. He does not exact, where He only invites. Not but that there is even in this case a certain measure of

* Simili quoque anathemati subjicit eos qui sanctum virginum vel aliarum mulierum voluntatem veli accipiendi, vel voti emittendi quoque modo sine justâ causâ impedierint.—Sess. xxv., de Regular et Monial. cap. 18.

† Negligere vocationem religiosam per se, non est peccatum; divina enim consilia per se non obligant.—S. Ligor. Theol. mor. lib. iv. cap. 1, dub. 5.

moral duty. We cannot admit that a counsel coming from God, and especially one of such importance, can ever be lawfully regarded as a mere nothing. Nevertheless, this appeal does not bind the soul with the rigour of a precept. If anyone refuses to listen to it, or to obey it, it will perhaps make Jesus sigh, as He did in the case of the young man in the Gospel, whom He looked upon, whom He loved, and whom He called, but who was quite unwilling to come at the call of Jesus (St. Mark x. 21). Yes, Jesus will sigh, perhaps He will weep; He often keeps silence; it is very serious, very painful, it may become very sad; but generally, it does not go beyond this; He will make no reproach; He will not positively chastise.* He has not even said that, though forced to keep silence on this point of His predilection, He will not continue to speak to His creature on all kinds of inferior matters, in the degree that will enable him to continue a Christian, and to be saved.

No one has sounded the heart of God; no one has counted His resources. Besides that they are truly infinite; He makes use of them most willingly for souls who, from want of light, of direction, or of support, are deceived in good faith, as to the route that they have to take; and in a state of society such as ours, there are many of this description. The fact, however, remains a true misfortune, and the consequences of the mistake may be very bitter. Sometimes God recovers, by a sort of after-work, souls that He had first marked out as belonging exclusively to Himself, and whom the levity of

* Non cogo, non gravo: proficientem quidem coronabo, non proficientem non punio.—S. Chrysost. hom. 8, De Pœnit.—Consilium servatum habet majus præmium; non servatum nullam pœnam.—Bellarm. Controv. de Monach. lib. ii. cap. 7.

early years, the complete inexperience of life, the ignorance, the infidelity, or the bad passions of parents, and, we must add, the prejudices and the weakness of certain directors, have hindered from recognising in themselves the Divine sign. It is by the cross that Almighty God makes the reparation. The cross is the royal and usual instrument of all renewal. There is nothing it does not expiate, nothing that it is does not restore. Much more even than this, Almighty God seems sometimes to transport to the generation which is born of these misled persons, the honour and the benefit of the vocation which has been missed. There, where He wished to find a Religious Sister, He has found but a Christian wife. He avenges Himself divinely of this error, by making this person herself the mother of several children, who will consecrate themselves to God in religion, or in the Priesthood. Take notice, however, that this scarcely ever happens, except in the case in which the mistake has been innocently made; and we should deceive ourselves very much, if we thought that God always grants these magnificent compensations.

But having said this for the glory of love, and for the consolation of many, we must add (because it is the truth, and it concerns us extremely to know it), that though, in itself, a religious vocation does not oblige, under pain of sin, it may, nevertheless, by reason of certain circumstances, less rare than perhaps people imagine, become, for those who do not follow it, the occasion of a very grave sin, and in the end turn out to be their absolute ruin.

First, in this order itself, and without contradicting in anything the instruction we have just given, Almighty God can assuredly make His calls heard in such a

manner that to resist them, and especially to slight them, implies a considerable fault. But further, whether on account of their physical or moral temperament, or by reason of their passions, or of those infirmities which are their necessary result; or whether on account of the circumstances in which they find themselves placed, and in which, consequently, they would be obliged to live if they remained in the world—certain persons will not be saved, without the protection of the cloister, and without the particular helps reserved for those states which are perfect. If, then, they resist the voice which calls them, they place their foot on a slope which leads down to hell. Now, among those who are called, who can flatter himself that he is not of this number?

We run the risk, then, of losing everything by closing our ear to this voice; and, even if we finish, by reaching our last end, God alone knows the way we are to take to arrive at it. We shall walk awkwardly all our life; and it may be said that grace only reaches these souls, as it were, obliquely, and that Almighty God does not work in them but by compulsion. Nothing goes straight with them; nothing is simple, nothing is easy, except, perhaps, doing less good, or even doing evil. They find themselves, with only the common aids, in face of duties, of obstacles, of temptations, which Almighty God, if we may say so, only wills for them, when it is too late, and in which, although love follows them even then, yet justice interferes, and troubles with its authority the liberty of love. Where a breath would have been enough, God is constrained to employ the thunderbolt. Where three steps would have led to the end, it is necessary to take a thousand. Yes, these souls will be saved, but, as St. Paul says, only by passing through the fire (1 Cor. iii. 15).

No one can tell the purgatory that awaits them after death; but in this life, what unhappy marriages, what broken circumstances, what early widowhood, what maternal desolations, which are the consequences of vocations that have failed—consequences full of mercy, but most painful, and which they would never have had to suffer, if before deciding on their way, they had taken counsel of God, and if "before beginning their web," as the Prophet says, "they had taken counsel of the Holy Spirit" (Isaias xxx. 1). In short, then, when God deigns to address to us one of those holy words, of which He says Himself, "He that has ears to hear, let him hear," and again, He that can take it, let him take it;" let us beware, not only of hardening our hearts, but of not listening from the first, with humility, attention, and piety. Our gravest interests are at stake.

Let us examine everything with the greatest care; let us especially examine ourselves, without making however too much of the difficulty, which every enlightened and sincere man sees always in his own heart—I mean his own misery and unworthiness. It seems, then, that the end of religion being so sublime, certain great and strong souls alone, should be called to it, and that the only receivable, at least, the only allowable motives which should incline them to it, should be taken from a higher order. Oh! how little does he who believes this, know of the heart of God! How little has he comprehended the mystery of Jesus, and how ill has he been instructed in the constitution of the Church! It is of religious, as well as of the primitive Christians, that we have a right to say: "For see your vocation, brethren, that there are among you not many wise according to the flesh, and not many mighty, not many noble; but

the foolish things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the wise, and the weak things of the world, that He may confound the strong" (1 Cor. i. 26). Doubtless great souls are particularly fit for the Religious Life; and in all such, who are called to it, there is a certain radical aptitude to a relative elevation, at the same time a particular measure of courage and magnanimity. But how often also does this divine look, which constitutes a vocation, fall by choice on poor little souls, not only simple (which is a precious quality and disposition for the operations of grace,) but weak, without power of intellect, incapable of acquiring knowledge, frail of heart, attacked at an early period by all sorts of temptations, and sometimes most severely wounded in these struggles. Doubtless these are souls which are docile, upright, and sensible. May God preserve communities from receiving any other subjects than these! But after having been divinely cultivated, they remain very far from being heroic.

As to the motives which induce sometimes one, sometimes another to embrace this life, it is clear that, first and principally, they should be supernatural. But how often are not these motives enveloped in reasons, which are of this earth, like the fruit in its shell! How often does the Providence of God make use of nature, to conduct the soul to grace, drawing it thus, as He Himself has announced that He would, "with the cords of Adam" (Osee xi. 4), that is, with human cords! Thus it is a disgust, a spite, a breaking up of friendship, a ruin, a sad accident, which will sometimes serve as a passage for the light from on high, and become as the sun to the Divine seed. God is easy of access to His infant little ones, and the mystery of Bethlehem continues always in the Church. We have not, then, to consider here either the

occasion, or the apparent origin of the vocation to the Religious Life. An upright intention, and an habitual sincerity of character; an aptitude, at least at first, for the kind of life and for the special good work practised in the institute to which one is called; an attraction for it which is serious and persevering—I do not mean a sensible attraction, but one of the judgment and of the conscience; an attraction, for example, which the habitual feeling of prudent precaution gives us for a life which preserves us from the world and from ourselves; an attraction for gaining a greater degree of sanctity, for enjoying a more profound peace, for employing one's life in higher pursuits, for becoming more like Jesus Christ, for a more intimate union with Him, for a deeper insight into His holy mysteries, His interests, and His works, and hereafter a more ample share of His glory and of His joys—such are some of the marks by which those who discover them in themselves may believe they are truly called by God.

Let those, then, who have such sentiments as I have now described meditate on them with prayer; let them seek the counsel of an enlightened and pious Priest; let them submit to the trials he may think necessary or prudent, but to these trials only. This done, they may, they ought to, pursue their way without delay, and resolutely, because their rights are also those of God. Let them continue very faithful to a grace they should fear to lose, and which they should regard with great respect; let them not allow themselves to be stopped henceforth, either by their family, or by the world, or by the devil, whose assaults they must expect, since every religious vocation is like a fire which burns him. It is the moment for opening the soul to the full influence of hope, saying,

"Yet not I, but the grace of God with me" (1 Cor. xv. 10), "being confident that He who hath begun a good work in me will perfect it" (Philipp. i. 6). O God! You have said, "They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isaias xl. 31). What, then, is the question we are now considering? It is that of a simple trial. There is no religious profession which is not preceded by a novitiate, and before the novitiate comes the trial as a postulant. Ah! the world does not make use of such means for those states of life which are so dear to *her*—states more laborious, more painful, and, in certain points of view, more irrevocable than that of Holy Religion. Supposing even that, before engaging in them, one could take similar securities, the world would not require us to take them. The world is only on its guard against God, and it is only full of distrust, when the Church mixes itself with the matter. "Whereas you yourselves are wise," said St. Paul to the Corinthians, "you gladly suffer the foolish; for you suffer if a man bring you under bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take from you, if a man strike you on the face" (2 Cor. xi. 19).

It is always the same contradiction and the same injustice. Let the world be imprudent, foolish, tyrannical, it is hardly ever that one complains of it. But let God work marvels of love and of wisdom; let the Church take the greatest precautions, in consideration of man's liberty, in respect for his dignity, in safeguards against his weakness, in prudence in her permissions, in patience in her trials, the world murmurs, nevertheless, and accuses and sometimes blasphemes. My God! how easily You will be justified, and what will be Your

triumph in the day when evidence will oblige men to judge Your conduct aright!

These are the principal matters we wished to say to you on this grave and fundamental question of a religious vocation. I shall now describe the state to which this vocation leads.

II.

When the words are just and exact, we have only to ascertain their meaning, in order to arrive at a correct idea of the realities they express. Now, a word is just and exact when it is regarded and consecrated as such, by the use of the whole human family. And it is still more true of the authentic words adopted by the Church. It is, then, in the very word "religion" that we must search for the true idea of the Religious State.

If Religion is the link which unites morally the creature to the Creator, a state so eminently religious that this word becomes its own proper name, must evidently be that in which the bonds that bind man to His Creator are the most numerous, intimate, and indissoluble. And if it is possible for man to give himself to God, so as to become His own exclusive domain and property; to give to Him all that he has, all that he is, all that he can be; directing his whole life to God alone, to His service, to His glory, to His works, and thenceforth and for ever putting aside from him, as a thing profane and strange, whatever would distract his mind from God, engage his affections, and diminish the gift he had received—this state would evidently be a *Religious* State. Such is, in truth, the state which we call religious, and because it is such, therefore we give it, with one accord, that venerable name.

First of all, and essentially, it is a state of consecration, of the donation of oneself, and of all that belongs to oneself, to God. This act may and should have, without doubt, manifold consequences. It is clear that he who gives himself to God up to that point, that is, of total abandonment, alienates several of his natural rights, imposes on himself an increase of sacrifices, and subscribes to many duties of supererogation. He puts himself visibly into new relations with the Church, with the family, with civil society, and fixes himself, in consequence, in very particular conditions of existence. He plants his feet in a career of perfection, which is both higher and more vast; he engages himself officially to walk in it. It is quite enough that he enters into an order of the divine service, more regular and more intimate, so as to be morally bound to become more holy. That he obliges himself also, by promises that are irrevocable, to the employment of certain means, divinely established, to assure his perseverance and his progress; for example, that he binds himself by vows to the practice of the evangelical counsels—all this we understand; also, that he should regard the performance of these vows less as a matter of prudence, in order to arm and defend himself, than as a matter of justice which he should render to God. But these are but rays: there is a fire from which they come. Now, this fire is the bond which unites man more perfectly to God; it is this official consecration, this entire handing over of himself to his Creator—it is this, which is the essence of the Religious State. Having many consequences, this state can manifest itself in many different ways and have relative ends, very different from one another. One may devote himself, for example, to the divine service or

to that of his neighbour; but the foundation is the same —it is what we have stated it to be.

Whether the consecrated Host be simply offered to God and consumed by the Priest alone, by whose word of power it is brought forth and immolated; or whether it be offered at first to God, and then exposed on the Altar, to become at once an object, a model, and a source of adoration; or whether it be carried to a cleric, to a virgin, to a soldier preparing to go to battle, to the mother of a family, to a child, to an old man, to a captive, to one who is sick; whether it brings with it to one light, to another strength, elsewhere consolation, preservation, encouragement, or a remedy—the substance of all this is that it is a Host, a victim. This is its proper state, the foundation of all its acts, and the cause of all its effects.

Thus it is with a Religious. Whatever may be in other respects the form of his religious life, and the spirit of his rule, and the proximate end of his institute, that which predominates over everything in him, that which establishes and vivifies all, is that he is a Religious—that is to say, consecrated to God by an authentic act. Such is the express teaching of Suarez, in whom, as Bossuet observes, we hear the whole school of theologians. "We call," he writes, "this state religious by reason of the last and principal end to which it tends, and this end is God Himself. The worship of God and His service is its first object. Those who embrace it consecrate themselves especially and totally to God, and therefore it is that the name of religious is given to them by pre-eminence."*

* Dicitur hic status religionis ex habitudine ad finem ultimum ac principalem in quem tendit, qui est Deus ipse, cujus cultus princi-

But as there is but one religion, that of Jesus Christ; as, further, all the Christian states necessarily have their root in Him, and are always the extension and prolongation of His states, the Religious State cannot be anything else than a more express imitation of one of the modes of existence which Jesus manifested when on earth, a more profound comprehension of the mystery of His holy life, and especially of His religious life, which is, as it were, the very soul of His whole earthly existence.

Not that there is question here of the religion of Jesus, which we might call official, and the acts of which constituted His public Ministry; such, for example, as His bloody Sacrifice on the Cross, His mystic immolation in the supper-chamber, the establishment and government of His Church, the institution and administration of the Sacraments, the preaching of the Gospel, the intimation of laws, and other religious acts of the same order. Regarded in this light, the religion of Jesus is the principle of the Christian Priesthood, and it is by it exclusively that this religion is continued and exercised in this world. But we are speaking of that fundamental and interior religion of Jesus which precedes His public teaching, and which, though it serves it as a foundation, subsists independently of it. We are speaking of that religion which results from the sole fact of His Blessed Incarnation, that is to say, of the ineffable union of His two natures,

paliter in hoc statu intenditur, cuique homines specialiter, et omnino in eo consecrantur, et inde per antonomasiam religio dicitur.—De Virt. et Statu Religionis. Tract. vii., lib. 2. cap. 1. He adds at ch. 4: Dominium sui in Deum transfert (religiosus).—St. Thomas had already said: Religio est quædam virtus per quam aliquis ad Dei servitium et cultum aliquid exhibet. Et ideo antonomastice religiosi dicuntur illi qui se totaliter mancipant divino servito. 2a 2æ Quæst. clxxxvi., art. 1.

and of the relations which it establishes between His Humanity and His Divinity, or, as He Himself loved so much to describe it, between Himself and His Father. In truth, it is clear by this fact alone that Jesus was the Word Incarnate; He was, He lived in a complete state of consecration, of belonging and appertaining to His Father; so much so, that by this means, as was excellently remarked by the mystical school of the French oratory, of which the admirable Olier was one of the most eminent interpreters, He was constituted the *Religious of His Father.* * In this, according to our view, is the Divine model, and, consequently, the parent source, of the Religious State. The reason here on earth of the Religious Life, its mission in the Church and in humanity, is to perpetuate among us the interior religion of Jesus towards God His Heavenly Father. It may serve, and it does so effectively, other ends besides; but this is its principal intention.

Besides, with the humble respect and the ardent piety which become such an act, let us open together, for a moment or two, this Book of Life, this supreme and eternal Pontifical, which is the life of this great Victim, this absolutely perfect Religious, this book of Jesus Christ our Lord. You will see, in the full light of day, what you have doubtless had as yet only a glimpse of.

* Doubtless we see clearly in this the dawn of a Priesthood, and the acts by which this interior religion of Jesus makes use of necessarily are true sacerdotal acts. We are about to say so. But between what we call here the religion of Jesus, and what constitutes, properly speaking, His Priesthood, there is, if we are not deceived, making necessary allowances, the same relation and the same difference as between this initial, interior, and private Priesthood, which is inherent in the Christian state, and that superior, special, and official Priesthood, to which there is no means of access for baptised Christians but Holy Orders.

But, to go back to the first principle, regard God in His inward life, such as the faith reveals it to us. You will see Him contemplating Himself, loving Himself, possessing Himself, giving Himself, and uniting Himself eternally to Himself; you will see Him in retirement, in repose, consummated and immutably seated within Himself. Therein is His simplicity, His unity, His felicity, His sanctity. It separates Him infinitely from everything that is not Himself to such a degree, that, when He communicates Himself outside Himself, He remains still *wholly* interior, and that, uniting Himself to His creatures, to the degree of making Himself to flow, even into their essence,* He remains absolutely pure from all contact with them, and is nothing of all that they are.

Here it is that we find the type of the life of Jesus, which is devoted, before all things, to contemplate and to honour this divine life. Jesus, by the state in which He is, refers everything to God. He has an Eye only to look at Him, an Ear only to listen to Him, a Hand only to lay hold of Him, a Heart only to love Him, an Organ only to make use of for Him, an Instrument only to serve Him. There is only one Throne on which God sits, only one kingdom of which He is King, only one Temple of which he is the God, only one creation where He exercises, in liberty and in plenitude, the infinite rights of a Creator. Jesus exists and lives, first of all, for these ends. But He is not only grasped by the almighty and all-loving Hand of the Divinity; being a Creature, active and free, He gives Himself to Him Who grasps Him; He embraces Him Who clasps Him; He abandons Himself to Him Who possesses

* Per intrinsecam habitationem sola Trinitas menti illabitur.—S. Thom. Summ. 3 p. Quæst. viii., art. 8, ad 1.

Him; and we may say that on both sides there is a similar energy of action, which forms a dependence with which nothing else can be compared.

He is born in this state. To exist thus, or to have a being at all, is for Him one and the same thing. God possesses Him in begetting Him, and, at the first instant when this Word commenced to live in His Humanity, He is already, as He will be for ever, He Whom God eternally begets in Himself.

Jesus is born, then, thus entirely consecrated, and it is why the Archangel said to Mary, "The Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (St. Luke i. 35). From the moment of His conception, He belonged, officially and exclusively, to God, to His worship, to His glory, to His works. He is positively a Religious. He has His rule traced out in advance, and from which He will never depart, from which He will never ask a dispensation, even from a single point, even from a single tittle (St. Luke xvi. 17). This rule was given Him, in its completeness, from His entrance into the world, and He subscribed to it with a fervent heart: "O my God, I have desired it, and Thy law is in the midst of my Heart" (Ps. xxxix. 9). This engagement is of great extent, and we cannot, indeed, in reality, see the end of the obligations it implies. It is equivalent to a true vow, and it is in the person of Christ that the holy Prophet spoke when he said, "I will pay my vows to the Lord before all His people, in the midst of the House of the Lord, in the midst of Thee, O Jerusalem" (Ps. lxiv. 2). Jerusalem is the appointed place, the favoured city, where vows are to be paid. It is there, then, that Jesus will finish paying His vows; but He commenced paying them in the womb of His Blessed Mother.

Of all the attributes of God, of His rights, of His designs, of His commandments, of all His wills, there is not a single one which does not regard Jesus, there is not a single one that Jesus does not regard. His rule is always to give pleasure to God in all things, and in every kind of way. This implies duties which we may well call infinite. It is there that those four great orders of holy acts have their beginning, which form the foundation of all religion, and are, so to speak, the Religious Life in practice; namely, adoration, thanksgiving, reparation, and impetration. Doubtless, it is only in His exterior sacrifice, and in the character of Priest, that Jesus accomplishes the fulfilment of this fourfold duty. But, first of all, He renders it under the title of a Religious, and in a manner quite interior. His state is to give it, and His life has not definitively any other employment. It is by these acts, as by four immense, impetuous, and continuous currents, that this life flows back into that source from which it is incessantly issuing, that is to say, into the bosom of the Father. These acts continue to be the basis of all the other good works of Jesus: they are as their hidden stay and sap. Everything He says as Doctor, all that He does as Worker of miracles, as Legislator, as Saviour, as Pontiff, or in any other character whatever, He does it, and says it, first of all, in the character of a Religious, as being consecrated, devoted, and bound, as obedient to His Father, as fulfilling a vow made to His Father. And all this, you understand, is without alternative, without any possible return, without any possible repentance or change of mind. Not only what Jesus does one day, He does always, but, pledged as He is, He cannot ever do otherwise. It is by His state that He is bound, and His bond is His state

itself. After His own state as God, there is none more fixed than this religious state of Jesus. It springs from the hypostatic union, as the branch springs from the root; it is from that union that it comes; it is in that, that it is rooted; it derives from it a divine immutability; and it is thus that Jesus is consecrated to God.

But in attaching Him so exclusively to God, this consecration separates Him, if not from everything that is not God, at least from everything that does not refer to God. Because He is the one great *consecrated* Being, He is also the one great *separated* Being. It is one of the most striking characteristics of His life in the midst of men, and it is a new aspect under which He is the type of the Religious Life.

Jesus is separated, first, by His own transcendent and incomparable excellence. It is clear that this places Him out of the ordinary line, and entirely apart. He is so, further, by His ministry of Mediator and High Priest. He alone can perform these duties, and, in fact, He alone does perform them. As the High Priest under the old Law was separated from the people, and entered alone into the Holy of Holies, Jesus, leaving the crowd at His feet, and His murderers too, and His Disciples, and even His Holy Mother, ascends alone the cross in order to accomplish upon it His Sacrifice. He dies exteriorly, as He has always lived interiorly, between heaven and earth, at a height where none can reach Him. But besides—and it is in this respect that He becomes our model—between Him and all that surround Him, and especially what is inferior to Him, there are all kinds of voluntary and permanent separations, which keep Him here below at a distance from everything which is earthly,—pure, free, disengaged, and, as David said so well in the Person of Jesus, "I am alone and poor" (Ps. xxiv. 16). . . .

He is separated from sin: this is self-evident, and outweighs all the rest. "It was fitting," in fact, says St. Paul, "that we should have such a High Priest, holy, innocent undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. vii. 26). Between Him and the shadow of sin there was an abyss which we may call, the impossible. He was further separated from the world: "He was not of the world" (St. John xvii. 14). Far from wishing to please it, He comes, on the contrary, to accuse it, to condemn it, to curse it (St. Matt. xviii. 7), to overcome it (St. John xvi. 33), to excommunicate it, which He did by excluding it from His prayer (St. John xvii. 9). He comes to make known its malice, to expose its sophisms, to break its charms, to baffle its cunning, to snatch from it its prey, to dethrone, to banish, to exterminate its prince (St. John xii. 31). He is also separated from all that pleases worldly minds, and from a thousand things which, in just measure, most men may lawfully enjoy; such as property, honours, and pleasures. He is poor, poor by choice, and in fact. He is born in a stable, and dies on a cross, and in the course of His life He can say, Who always said the truth, "The Son of Man has not where to lay His Head" (St. Luke ix. 58). As to honours, He wished for none. The people propose to make Him King; He escapes from their hands (St. John vi. 15). The only glory He accepts is that which redounds to His Father (St. John viii. 49; xvii. 4). It is this glory that He seeks, that He pursues, and exacts from others. But for Himself, He remains humble; He keeps in the background, and dies by choice saturated with contempt (Lament. ii. 6). As to what men call pleasures, you know that He renounced them. "The joy that was set before Him," saith St. Paul, "was

the joy of the cross" (Heb. xii. 2). He did not live an instant, so to speak, without suffering; He is the Man of Sorrows (Isaias liii. 3), and the mere thought that, while on earth, He indulged in the least sensible or purely human pleasure is revolting to every Christian soul, and affects it as a blasphemy.

Jesus lives, besides, separated from human affairs, and absolutely free from all family cares. He is yet a Child when He asserts, on this point, His inviolable liberty, which is none other than the right of God over Him, and the sacred duty that flows from it; and later on, in His public life, when His mother and His brethren ask for Him, He says, "Who is My mother, and who are My brethren? for whosoever shall do the will of My Father that is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother" (St. Matt. xii. 48). He is requested to interfere between two brothers as to the division of the family property. He declines (St. Luke xii. 14). He exempts Himself from all charge, whether political or civil. It is not that He refuses to serve His country, but He serves it in a Divine way, and without subjection to its ordinary servitudes, otherwise than by condescension, in order to deprive the wicked of any pretext for blaming Him, and to prevent any scandal on the part of the weak (St. Matt. xvii. 24).

He is, in a sense, separated from Himself; and, in that He is Man, He is separated inwardly and outwardly; in neither sense is He a Proprietor. He lives divested of self, as of all things else. He disposes, as Master, neither of His powers, nor of His actions—not even of a look, of a sigh, or of a tear. "Of Myself I cannot do anything" (St. John v. 30): such are His words. It is a rule without any exception. In everything He is dependent, and He is always obedient. He is only the Man of God; it

is purely God Who lives and acts in His Humanity. Though He also lives and acts, His Humanity only employs itself in serving God, and in making a passage for Him into souls. In a self-interested point of view He is as if He were not; so that Jesus is more than separated from Himself, more than dead to Himself. As to self in Him, there is actually no such thing. Do I, then, say, that being thus separated from everything, and from all persons, He forgets His creatures, and dispenses Himself from serving them? Do I say that His sublime solitude either inclines Him to indifference, or condemns Him to inaction? Do I mean, that in order to be entirely consecrated to God, He ceases to belong to us, and that, in a word, in order to possess Him wholly, God confiscates Him entirely, and makes Him useless to us? No, certainly no! The sun is solitary also in the height of heaven; it is precisely because it is so high and so solitary in its height, that it enlightens and warms the whole earth. Thus it is with this Divine Religious. It is because He belongs entirely and only to God that He is so capable of becoming the happiness, the well-being of all; it is because He is the Lamb of God that He is the Victim of mankind. The holy unity of His life renders Him universal; and since, leading in all sincerity the life of a Traveller, He goes on, always nearing His journey's end, which is also His beginning, and which He calls His Father. The higher He ascends towards His Father, the more He lives retired and sanctifies Himself in His Father, the more also He extends and increases His all-beneficent influence; so that He is more useful to us on the cross than in the cradle, and still more useful to us in heaven, than on the cross. *

* It is only when He has ascended into heaven that He sends us His Holy Spirit (Joann. vii. 39).

What, then, have we now done but led you up the mountain, and shown you there your Divine Model? This history of the inward life of Jesus, is it not the theory of your own, and do you not recognise in it your own religious state? You also, like Jesus, are among the consecrated; as He was, you are among the separated, but first, among the separated. It is the order, the rule of God's proceeding. Jesus, Who comes down from above (St. John viii. 23), is first of all consecrated, and it is this which separates Him. As to you, you come from below, since, having drawn you from nothing, God draws you also from sin. He must first separate you, in order, after that, to consecrate you. This order is found everywhere in all the relations of the creature with God, and it is what St. Paul points out when he says, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Coloss. i. 13).

You are, then, separated, and, first of all, from sin. You are so by the title of Christians, but more so by the title of Religious; and this is why your profession is unanimously regarded as a second baptism.* It confirms the first; we may say, it perfects it. It is a more entire death to every kind of bad life, a more complete burial of the old man, and, consequently, the principle of a more thorough, and a more glorious resurrection.

It is for this reason that it separates you more completely from the world; not only inwardly by the spirit, but outwardly also. Those perversities, that malice, those untruths, those sophisms, those snares, those illusions which the Gospel calls the world you repudiated, when washed by the holy water, you were born

* S. Thom. 2da 2dæ Quæst. clxxxix. art. 3, ad 3.—Suarez, loc. cit. Tract. vii., lib. 6, cap. 13.

again in God. Renewing first, by embracing the Religious Life, this necessary repudiation, you make it more absolute by quitting for ever, in the degree that this present life renders possible, the large mass of those who, by their condition in life, are more exposed to the influence of the world. You quit what the Gospel so well calls the *world*, that is, what is divided, scattered, agitated, passing, perishing; all that is measured, dissipated, or destroyed by time, the prey of the passing hour, human life turned into dust, and scattered by a whirlwind. You quit the country of slaves, of the hard-worked, of the busy, of all the double-hearted; you fly, you retire, you take up your abode in the heart of the desert, or on the mountain-top, far away from mire and noise, nearer to heaven and to the sun: it is a separation.

You are separated, also, in other ways. You break off with business, though not, indeed, with work: work is a law; business is a slavery. You separate yourselves, I say, from business; and, considered in itself, it is henceforth forbidden you. You quit your family, and in the measure traced by the hand of the Church—so wise, so holy, so sure, so discreet, and so kind to all—you remain in temporal matters disengaged from it. As to your country, it is the same. You do not abjure it; it is also a mother. You do not forget it; far from it. You serve it in your way, and better than many others; but you go beyond it, and live in a higher region, in the country which is interior, in the mystical Jerusalem, in the universal city, where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither Greek nor barbarian, but where all are one in Christ (Gal. iii. 28). Wherever you may be, as to the body, is a matter of little consequence; according to the spirit, there is your abode.

You do yet more; it is within you, that you carry the sword, and that you make the separation; you strike at the root, and endeavour to destroy that sap of sin which we call the old man, the flesh, or concupiscence. As far as you can you cut up this root; and if you do not wholly dry up this sap, you hinder it from showing life and putting forth its fruits: it is the aim of that triple vow, which makes you always poor, chaste, and obedient.

But in accomplishing to the full these various separations, this triple vow forms the foundation of your divine consecration. This vow, then, is a magnificent act which places you in a sublime position. It is the culminating act of your liberty, and the most illustrious mark of your moral grandeur. In making it, you exercise an astonishing power—that of surpassing yourselves, and of borrowing from God His modes of existence. This vow withdraws your life from vicissitudes, from frailties, from laxity, from base relapses, and fatal changes of mind. It is an immovable throne, from whose height you rule over time, the earth, and hell. Jesus governed all from the height of His hypostatic union, and you rule over all from the height of this sacred promise. It unites you indissolubly to truth, to justice, to sanctity, to love, and inaugurates for you that liberty of heaven, where we are fixed in what is good, so that we shall not then be able any more to do what is evil. Making you the captives of God, it frees you from the servitude of creatures. Your vows are the sacramental word of your heavenly Pasch, or, rather, they are this Pasch itself. They suppose your passion and your crucifixion; they contain them, they infer them, and, at the same time, they commence your resurrection. They enable you to die to sin, to creatures, to yourself; they keep you in this death, which is "pre-

cious in the sight of the Lord" (Ps. cxv. 15), and, at the same time, they make you live a life hidden in God with Christ (Coloss. iii. 3)—a new life, a higher life, and over which death has by right lost all its empire (Rom. vi. 9). In a word, as we have already said, the vows are your consecration.

Do not, then, be astonished, that while a simple Priest can give you the religious habit, your profession, or, at least, the taking the veil, which is its public acknowledgment, remains a pontifical act, reserved for the Bishop. The Bishop alone is the perfect Priest: this is why he alone can do the works that are perfect—that is, in their entireness. The Priest prepares, he baptises, he blesses; the Bishop finishes, he confirms, he ordains, he consecrates. You are, then, consecrated ones, and all in you is consecrated,—your eyes, your lips, your ears, your hands, your feet, your knees, your whole body, your mind, your heart, your will, your faculties, your life, your strength, your time. All these are no longer your own, nor do they belong to any one else in the whole world; for they who dispose of you as your superiors do, and can, only dispose of you in the name of God, and as holding His place. Nothing in you belongs to you any more; all is alienated, and belongs to another; you are sold and delivered up, in principle, into the hands of the Sovereign Proprietor. You are the property of God, which belongs only and exclusively to Him. Like Jesus, you live for the Father (St. John vi. 58), and you live only for Him; to adore Him, to praise Him, to exalt Him, to bless Him, to render to Him a thousand duties His holy perfections demand of you. You live, to thank Him, to console Him, to indemnify Him, and make Him compensation and amends, to love Him; to serve Him in working for Him,

to serve Him in suffering for Him, to serve Him in consuming yourself for Him. You live, above all things, in order to *belong* to Him. There are in this single word whole worlds of life, of grandeur, of sanctity, of glory, and of felicity. You are, as it were, the theatre of the rights of God—a career free and open to the manifestations of His will, a spacious and clear firmament, in which, like stars, His designs may shine and circulate. I will not say anything of your being instruments of religion, burning lamps, human censers, intelligent tabernacles, and altars of love. I say assuredly all, in calling you what you are, victims—victims which God the Father holds in His hands, which God the Son immolates, which God the Holy Ghost consumes, and which should be given in fellowship, to the three Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity. It is what the holy Fathers teach in calling you holocausts.* Is there anything which belongs so much to God as the sacrifice which is a holocaust? It is the special title by which you belong to God. Also these same holy Fathers all say, that you cannot henceforth voluntarily withdraw anything whatsoever of yourself from God without committing a robbery and a true sacrilege.† The chalice, once consecrated, is used only for the sacrifice; we cannot, without profanation, employ it for any other use, though this use be otherwise lawful, and good in itself.

* Cum quis suum aliquid Deo vovet et aliquid non vovet, sacrificium est: cum verò omne quod habet, omne quod vivit, omne quod sapit, omnipotenti Deo voverit, holocaustum est. . . Sensum, linguam, vitam atque substantiam quam perceperunt, Domino immolant: quid est nisi holocaustum offerunt; imo magis Domino holocaustum fiunt?—S. Gregor. Magn. Homil. in Ezech. lib. ii., Homil. 8, 15.

† Sacrilegium et furtum committitur, si res Deo sic dicata subtrahatur.—S. Basil. Reg. brev. 14.—Ita Cassian. Institut. lib. ii. cap. 8.

So great, so grand, and so deep a matter is your consecration, that it affects all your actions. A sap of religion rises up from the very roots of your being, and divinely vivifies all that comes from your soul. In everything, everywhere, for everything, you are Religious. Whatever human act you perform, though a most common one, this action may and ought to be consecrated; there is nothing, even to your very sleep, which may not be a part of the worship you render to God. Finally* I repeat it, it is the religion itself of Jesus, interior and essential, which passes in you to go to His Father. You are to Jesus Christ an additional humanity, appropriated to the holy and impassioned will, which He has always, to render to His Divine Father this supreme, total, and infinite duty which we call Religion.

Creatures have their part here—a necessary and excellent part. It is with you as it is with Jesus. This Man of God, this Religious of God, is at the same time the gift of God to the world. You are so also in Him. The more you enter into His states, the more also you share in His relations, and the more you contribute to His works. As you advance in sanctity, you equally expand by love. As among the houses in a city there is none more open, more social, and more popular than that which specially belongs to God, and which is called the Church, so there are no beings on whom mankind have, supernaturally speaking, more claims, and from whom they derive greater profit, than those who are consecrated to God—Priests, religious men, and religious women. Your love for your neighbour may show itself in a thousand ways, the service you render them may put on a thousand shapes, as I have

* Omnes actus religiosi pertinent ad divinum cultum sicut quædam sacrificia.—S. Thom. 2da 2dæ. Quæst. lxxxvii. art. 6.

already told you; but this love and this service are attached to the very essence of your state to such a degree, that their sole absence reduces it to an illusion and to a lie.* And all this has its source in your consecration to God. As it is only the Priest that gives the Host to the faithful, it is God alone who gives you to the people; and it is after having consecrated you, and on the very ground of your consecration, that He gives you to them. And see how justly it happens that, in giving yourselves to others, and sometimes with profusion, you not only continue holy, but you sanctify those who receive your gift, make use of your services, or submit to your influence.

Thus much, then, as to what is positive, and, as it were, the substance of your state. All the rest is only accessory, the preparation, the condition, the defence, or the means; but what I have said is essential to it, and it will continue in heaven, when all labours are past, all struggles are over, and all tears dried up.

Cling, then, to that which is positive; always contemplate this substance of your state, through all the earthly accidents which are necessarily attached to it here below; and let the splendour, the sublimity, and the beatifying goodness and excellence of the substance of your state cause you not only to accept, but to love, to embrace with ardour the obscurity, the humiliation, and the labours, often painful, which attend its mere earthly accidents. Do not take the means for the end, nor the scaffold for the temple which it only helps to build, nor the diet for the health which it procures or preserves. Do not think that God asks you to love this diet for its own sake, and to find that this scaffold is beautiful, and

* Suarez, loc. cit. lib. i. cap. 4, et lib. ii. cap. 1.

to relish these means as if they were a thing most sweet in itself. What God does not ask of you do not ask of yourselves; but esteem the foundation so much, and love it with so great an affection, that to protect its solidity and to assure its permanence, anything may become easy to you, by dint of being willed.

In conclusion, say to yourselves, repeat to yourselves incessantly, "By the grace of my Heavenly Father, for His glory, for His joy, and in union with my Divine Spouse Jesus, I am consecrated to God, I am delivered over to God, I belong to Him without division, for all things, for ever. Say this with faith, and account that in this is the essence of your state, the heart of your rule, the soul of your constitutions, the reason of all your regulations, the justification of all your practices, the explanation of all God's conduct, whether exterior or interior, in your regard, the substance of all your duties, the aliment which nourishes all your virtues, the principle of all your progress, the living source of your sanctity—not to add the invincible defence, the inviolable refuge, and the infinite consolations which you will find in them.

He who sees the star sees its rays: I have not, then, explained to you the nature of the Religious State without giving you a glimpse of the marvellous fruits it produces, and the inestimable blessings it enshrines. However, some developments are here necessary; we have promised them to you, and they will form the conclusion of this important instruction.

III.

The first of all the fruits of the Religious Life, incontestably, is the particular and excellent glory which every one in it renders to God. The hearts of Saints have been

consumed with the passion for this glory. There is no happiness to be compared with that with which the satisfaction of this great desire fills the soul. Its best sentiments all unite in this hunger for God; they touch each other there on their summit, they there mutually perfect one another. They act there in perfect harmony, they there glorify each other; and though the soul is not wholly satisfied, yet they have there their jubilation and triumph. The glory rendered to God is the confession of the truth, the accomplishment of justice, the establishment of order. It is heaven, shedding its rays freely on the earth, and the earth flourishing in heaven, according to the sweet energy which the Blood of Jesus gives in bedewing it. It is the success of the Incarnation, the fruit of the Redemption, the repose of creation. It is the full harmony of the world with the eternal thoughts, desires, and attractions. It is the plunging of a created being into its source, and blooming, to the fullest extent, in its centre. It is the exceeding joy of the good angels, and the festival of the Celestial City; it is the exultation of the Holy Trinity. It is also the consolation of the whole universe in its "unspeakable groanings" after its last end (Rom. viii. 26), and the secret of its patience in awaiting the moment its Creator has fixed to accomplish its deliverance, and to consummate its joy. It is something so great, so sovereign, so precious, so indispensable, so urgent, that the certainty, or even the serious hope of co-operating with it ever so little, is capable of setting the soul of the Christian on fire. Now, they are not either drops, nor even streams, but they are real torrents of glory, which, from the heart and life of a true Religious, will burst forth even to the bosom of God, to inundate and overflow all His attributes.

In truth, your life is a confession, an offering of praise, a witness. By the fact of your profession your whole being becomes a hymn to the Divinity. In quitting for ever all that lowers, enslaves, and divides, you glorify the sublimity, the liberty, and the unity of God. In renouncing all the goods of earth you declare that God is sufficient, that if we possess Him nothing more is necessary; and by that, you exalt not only His Providence, but also and especially the value of His own eternal treasures, and His own infinite plenitudes. In espousing chastity, you say grandly that all the beauty and the joys of earth pale before His beauty, and the delights that are at His right hand; and that, after His loveliness, all the loveliness of earth hardly merits even a passing look, much less any longing desire of the heart. In binding yourselves to obedience, you marvellously honour His Divine sovereignty. Those vows, which are the seal of your engagements, are a manifest glory to the unchangeable fixity of His being. Living in a state which is one of entire and habitual sacrifice, you praise incessantly His sanctity. Forming a true family, and remaining, according to your rule, united one to the other, you celebrate in practice what you imitate—I mean the society and the ineffable union of the Divine Persons. Dedicated, besides, in one way or another, to the service of the Church, and to the spiritual, or, it may be, to the temporal, well-being of your brethren, you render a direct honour to the paternity of God, to His mercy, and to His beneficence. There is nothing in you which does not reflect something in Him, which does not image one of His glories, and which does not, like a mirror, send it back to Him again. In a word—as you are officially the organs of the holy religion of Jesus, of His interior and permanent state of consecra-

tion, dedication, and worship—it is clear that you give to God, surely, and in a most abundant measure, His true, His only, and His supreme glory, which is, personally, Jesus Christ. You show to Him His Son; you are the utterances of His Word, you are to Him His Jesus, and His Jesus, lifted up, fastened to the cross, and sacrificed. And this results from your very state. The sole act which fixes you in it implies this immense glory you give to God. Had the last breath with which you concluded the utterance of your vows been really the last moment of your life, you would have really given to God all this glory, and you would have been rewarded in heaven as having really given it. Measure, then, if you can, that glory, which is merited by a life of ten, of twenty, of fifty years, passed in the spirit of this Divine state, in fidelity to so holy an engagement, and in the development of this grand first principle!

Another fruit of this holy and blessed state is the special, intimate, and fruitful union which it forms between the soul and Jesus Christ.

One can hardly foresee what will be the temperament of love in heaven. Here on earth every one has remarked that love is a dreamer of things to come. It lives very little in the present. In truth, what is the present to one who loves, but that which is always passing away? In expecting eternity, which is the first and last country of love, it seeks instinctively its shadow. The present is always escaping from its grasp: it lives in the past; but it lives especially in the future; for in spite of that magic of which our memory becomes capable, under the twofold influence of feeling and of imagination, and which makes it so powerful to transform, the past remains too much bound to what is real not to be greatly

limited by this union. The future, on the contrary, is at first very often the past which comes back, but which comes back brighter and more beautiful, and with a sort of air as if it would never pass away any more. Then the future, that is, the possible—and the possible has no bounds; therefore love plunges into it with delight, and it is then that we call love a dreamer. Whoever has loved Jesus ever so little has had his dreams on this subject. Does not a part of prayer consist in these dreams? One fancies to be at His Feet, under His Eyes, upon His Heart; one imagines oneself looking upon Him, hearing Him, living close to Him, and never quitting Him—dreams, if we may so call them, which are permitted, which are holy, and make one happy; not dreams in a human sense, which are never to be realised on earth; but dreams which, for faith, are quite different from ordinary dreams, since faith renders present the invisible, and gives us the substance of what God promises us hereafter (Heb. xi. 1). Well, never did the dream of a soul wounded by love make it conceive a union between it and Jesus Christ more divine than that which follows the religious profession; for this union is nothing else than a divine marriage with Jesus.

Doubtless it is a fact, that every Christian who is in a state of grace is the spouse of Jesus Christ. I have told you so already; it is truly so by its baptismal consecration. Measure the abyss which separates the grace of the Priesthood, the effect of holy ordination, from that which Baptism confers, you will know how much the Religious surpasses officially the Christian, in the order of a rooted union with God. This is the reason why, without contest or question, when the world speaks, especially of us, it calls us, priests. So all understand; and imme-

diately, when speaking of you, it calls you spouses of Jesus. You are so by excellence.

And besides, understand thoroughly, that in this as in all other respects nature is only the shadow of grace, and therefore, that everything there is of sanctity, of strength, and of sweetness in human marriages, is found in a far greater and higher degree in this union of the soul with our Lord. I speak of its intimacy, I speak of its reciprocity, both of sentiments, of duties, and of rights. I speak of the community of goods and of everything else. I speak of its indissolubility; I speak especially of the love and of the ineffable unity which is its result. "For the contract of this marriage is truly spiritual," writes the pious St. Bernard (so learned in this sort of knowledge), "and I say very little when I call it a contract: it is a true embrace, and a mutual possession, since the constant union of wills makes of two minds, only one. There is no fear that the inequality of persons should alter at all the union of wills; for love knows nothing of respect. The name love comes from loving, not from honouring. He may honour who trembles, who fears, who hesitates; but of such things, he who loves is entirely incapable. For love suffices for itself; it is its own proper and exclusive abundance. There, where it comes, it makes itself master, and holds in such captivity all the other sentiments of the heart, that it transforms and absorbs them. It is a question between the bride and the bridegroom, between a wife and her husband. What relation and what union do you wish there should exist between these two, but that of love; but a love so strong, that it even triumphs over that which nature seems to have rooted the earliest in our souls—the love, I mean, between parents and children? . . . For love is always a great thing; but still

it admits of degrees. Now, the highest of all is that of the spouse, especially when the bridegroom is not only a person who loves, but Love in person." * It is thus the Saints speak; and how can we better become saints, and comprehend the gifts of God, than by meditating on their words?

It is clear that a similar union is the source of many services. Love has a passion to serve, and there is none but love which can serve as love serves. The heart so sharpens the intellect; it renders the eyes so clear-sighted, the feet so quick, the arm so strong, the hand so delicate. If the child is the best servant of the father, how much more is the wife the best servant of her husband? Doubtless the husband serves her. What Jesus becomes to the soul, what He does for the soul, and in the soul, His Spouse, this soul, of herself, is unable to say. It is true, in all respects: He is and remains Master; but it is especially in love that He is Master; and the first right that this primacy of love confers on Him, is the primacy of service: He firmly purposes never to yield the least part of it. But how does His Spouse serve Him in her

* Si perfectè diligit, nupsit. . . Vere spiritualis sanctique connubii contractus est iste. Parum dixi, contractus: complexus est. Complexus plane ubi idem velle et nolle idem unum facit spiritum de duobus. Nec verendum ne disparitas personarum claudicare in aliquo faciat convenientiam voluntatum, quia amor reverentiam nescit. Ab amando quippe amor, non ab honorando denominatur. Honoret sane qui horret, qui stupet, qui metuit, qui miratur: vacant hæc omnia penes amantem. Amor sibi abundat; amor ubi venerit, cæteros in se omnes traducit et captivat affectus. . . . Sponsus et sponsa sunt. Quam quæris aliam inter sponsos necessitudinem vel connexionem, præter amari et amare? hic nexus vincit etiam quod natura arctius junxit, vinculum parentum ad filios . . . adde quod iste sponsus non modo amans, sed amor est.—S. Bern. serm. lxxxiii. in Cant.

turn? and what is the price of a state which assures to a poor creature the right, the aptitude, and the leisure, of serving God under the title of His Spouse?

It is to the Person of Christ, that the Religious renders her principal services. This seems to be the special part reserved to her. Being the Spouse, there are a thousand things which she sees, which she knows, which she guesses at, which she feels she can do, which she alone can see, and know, and guess, and feel, and do. There are all sorts of secret and sacred duties that she, above any other, can render to Him; and, in truth, she renders to Him all the duties which He Himself renders immediately to His Father; for He is one with His Father, and the regular object of the same worship; and the soul finds herself, with regard to Him, in a union analogous to that in which He Himself, as Man, is placed in reference to the Divinity. She contemplates, then, His perfections, and follows Him in all His mysteries: she follows Him with her religious service, she follows Him with her love. She espouses, so to speak, all His sentiments; and it is by this means she ends in espousing Him in person. She listens to His secrets; she opens her heart to the effusions of His love; she is at leisure for His pleasures; she respects His voluntary retirements, His secrets, His silence; she complies with His wills; she compassionates all His sufferings; she shares all His joys; she enters into all His aspirations, into His jealousies, and, if need be, into His indignations. In all things, whether inward or outward, she clings to Him as His faithful companion; she makes compensation and amends to Him for others' neglect and indifference; she consoles Him, she makes herself agreeable to Him, she caresses Him. Like Mary, in the days when He was on earth,

though in a manner entirely spiritual, and under very different figures, she shades His Head, she protects His repose, she prepares His food, she presents Him His drink, she washes His Feet, and anoints Him with her perfumes; she wipes away His sweat, and His tears; and there are times when she also stanches His Blood. Who could do all this, except a spouse or a mother?

Serving His adorable Person, she serves at the same time, and by necessity, His designs. A spouse means a "help-meet." From the beginning God established it so (Gen. ii. 18). She aids Jesus, then, in many ways, but first by the sole fact of the state in which she lives. Simply by being a Religious, she renders testimony to the faith, and proves practically the truth of Christianity. She honours grace, and makes a triumph of the cross. She becomes a page of the Gospel; and what God has written in that page she preaches with an eloquence to which no discourse hardly ever attained. She co-operates, on her part, to give to the Church that note of sanctity which separates her so gloriously from the society of all infidels and heretics, and which marks her out as worthy of the confidence and of the respect of all. She exhorts and encourages souls. In taking, and for ever, the evangelical counsels as her rule of life, she shows how light is the burden of His precepts. She continues to exclaim to those who, like Augustin before his conversion, are shaken, but not convinced: "What I, a frail woman, a young maiden, a child, can do, cannot you do also?" * She inspires many others with a great number of salutary reproaches, and makes several feel the divine goads. She also judges; her Spouse is the born Judge of the

* Irridebat me irrisione hortatoria, quasi diceret: tu non poteris quod isti, quod istæ?—Confess. Lib. viii. c. 11.

living and the dead, of Angels, and of every creature. She sits at His side, and takes part in the accusations which He draws up, in the processes He goes through, in the sentences He pronounces (St. Matt. xix. 28). In the virtue of this Divine Spirit, which is common to them both, she also convinces the world "of sin, of justice, and of judgment" (St. John xvi. 8),—of sin, which is the state whence God desires to withdraw it, and in which the world continues obstinately to live, or rather to die; of justice, of which it refuses the grace, because it will not suffer that grace should be the rule of its actions; of judgment, which it has the blindness not to fear, though it is a thing so fearful, so inevitable, and already commenced.

The world sometimes asks, What is the use of this religious woman? A strange question; and, moreover, strangely impertinent when it is the world that puts it; for if there be an acknowledged master in the science of losing time, of spending his strength uselessly, of rendering abortive the gifts of God, of making void the creation of man, and of bringing sterility on himself, whether for heaven or for earth, incontestably it is the world. In truth, if the life of a Religious had no other fruit than that of confounding and condemning the world, and thus of multiplying the chances of delivering the poor souls it deceives, such an existence, I say, would be most usefully employed, and ought to rank among the most well-spent lives. But these are, to say the truth, among the least useful services it renders to society. He alone, Whose spouses you are, can say to what a degree He has given you the virtue of fecundity, and consequently of utility.

All of you, according to the end and form of your

institute, do good works—works of religion and prayer, works of education and of instruction, works of charity and of mercy,—works, in short, which benefit mankind and the whole of society. Considering your state only in a human point of view—as, for example, the time it gives you, the interior and exterior liberty which it secures you, the direction of others and your co-operation with them which it brings you—it is evident that in all respects it places you in conditions most favourable for doing these good works, and of doing them better than any one else. But, besides, into this human work and into these labours, whatever they may be, the Divine blessing flows in torrents, from the mere fact that, being united to Jesus as His spouses, you perform them in His strength, and do all things as the married do, both of them taking equal shares.

Finally, which is at the root of all, it is by reason of this Divine bond that you become true mothers in the order of the generation of souls; and it is most especially in this that you are the *help-meets* of Jesus. You enter, on the one hand, into the fecundity of Mary, and even into that of the Holy Humanity, which is the supreme, equivalent, and universal organ of fecundity here below. The conversion of sinners, the perseverance of the just, the making of Saints, this is what you have always in view, even when you cultivate the minds, or give assistance to the bodies, of others; it is what you are able to accomplish, and what you actually accomplish, all of you, in the measure in which you are faithful to the grace given you in your state. And hence it comes that your state being one which renders so powerful a help, and is a source of such abundant spiritual gain to the Church, it is also for the entire human race a true honour, a safeguard, and a

special benefit. "And what would become of the world," said our Lord to St. Teresa, "were it not for My Religious?"*

Once more, it is for yourselves that this state is a treasure. Certainly in this matter it is quite permitted to regard yourselves; for if God loves you so much, how can you help loving yourselves? Must we not imitate God in all things? Besides, it is by loving Him in yourselves that you love yourselves in Him, and for Him; and this love is more than a need—it is a virtue and a duty.

You give yourselves to God, and to the full extent in which, so far as regards the state, any creature can give herself. Do you think that God will allow Himself to be conquered? He who loves so much to give, will He not be careful in returning your gift? "He is magnificent in His gratitude," saith the Scripture, "and He will return seven times as much" (Eccles. xxxv. 12). And this was the measure in the old law. Under the Gospel, that which He gives in return, at least to Religious, is a hundredfold (St. Matt. xix. 29). This hundredfold consists in all sorts of blessings, but especially of an admirable liberty, of an ever-flowing fountain of graces, of progress, and of merits. It is, consequently, a Divine security, a peace without parallel, here on earth, and a joy which far surpasses the best joys of the world.

First, your state makes you marvellously free. It is "the truth that makes you free," said Jesus (St. John viii. 32), and this truth is Jesus (*Ibid.* xiv. 6). You were only servants, but now you are free from service: are you not so, being His spouses? No one on earth is so free as you. The great slavery is sin; see to what an extent

* "Quid mundo, nisi ob religiosos?"

your blessed state withdraws you from it. Washed by this baptism of religion and of love, which is your holy profession, you have become entirely new creatures; your past has been taken from you—not taken so far as there is merit in the past; for what is done for God passes not away more than God Himself; but the past is taken from you so far as there is anything in it worthy of blame. Your profession is the Red Sea of your former life; faults and debts are all swallowed up in it; and if any one has a right to be exempt from that fear which the Holy Spirit counsels us to have for our past sins, even after they have been remitted (Eccles. v. 5), assuredly that right is yours. Doubtless the sources of these sins remain still in the depths of your soul; but how easy it is for you not to let them break forth! Your vows are more than an embankment; there issue from them rays so ardent as to dry up these sources of past sins; and if they yet distil some drops, they only serve as food for humility, and as one of those salutary infirmities of which St. Paul says that "power is made perfect in infirmity" (2 Cor. xii. 9). Shall I speak to you of the occasions of sin? To avoid them altogether, we must needs go entirely out of this world; but how many of them have become impossible for you! how many are for ever taken away! and as to those which remain, how few they are, relatively speaking, and especially how little dangerous! St. Bernard said of Religious, "You live more purely, you fall more rarely, you rise again more quickly." Who can sing like you: "Lord, thou has broken my bonds. I will sacrifice to Thee the sacrifice of praise" (Ps. cxv. 17). In truth, what have you quitted, in leaving the world, except those things of which the holy Doctor says so well, "that they burden those who possess them, that they sully those

who love them, and that they torment those who lose them."* The world to you was Egypt. The Israelites lived in Egypt; there they had their houses, their food, their relations, their habits of life; by forgetting the past, by forgetting history, by forgetting Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by not thinking any more of the future, of prophecy, of Jesus, they could taste there a degree of happiness; and yet, O my God! when Your people went forth out of this land of Egypt You relieved their backs from crushing burdens (Ps. lxxx. 6). The more you reflect upon these things, the greater advance you make in the knowledge of men and of life, the more clearly also you will see in them your own history.

And now a grand career is opened to you! Nothing hinders you from running in it; on the contrary, everything invites and presses you to do so. The Fathers have often compared you to birds, and the Scripture calls you doves. It is true your swiftness of motion recalls to mind, not those beings who walk on the paths of earth, but those charming and lively creatures whose country is the air, and who flap their wings in it at liberty. With what burden are they laden? what is the apparatus they carry? and where are the barriers which limit their progress? They have nothing borrowed, not even their clothing: their eyes, their wings, the atmosphere warmed by the sun, and the providence of the good God—this is all they possess, and this suffices them. Thanks to your holy privations, you are scarcely more burdened than the birds; and truly your souls are like them! You make yourselves free, as it were, by simplifying yourselves, and your state makes you thus simple. Outwardly and inwardly, all is easier for you than for others. Given by your very state

* S. Bern. Epist. 103, al. 297, ad fratrem Willelm.

to the holy labours of perfection, the ordinary virtues seem of little account with you, as masters think little of the performances of their scholars. That which is for many of your brethren in the world a crown, and a crown to conquer, for you is a ring of gold, which serves as an ornament for your feet. It is almost imperceptibly that you accomplish the precepts; the ordinary virtues seem with you of no account, and you do their works with much the same ease as the stream flows along its channel.

There is also another blessing of your state, which is a constant and ever-abundant source of grace, of merit, and of progress. In the world almost everything inclines man to evil. We must be always on our guard, and often in a state of defence. We are just only by pulling against the stream, and at the price of doing ourselves violence. In religion, on the contrary, in order to commit a sin we must make a great effort; all the inclinations are towards what is good: those which come from the position in which one is placed, and those which follow it. There is nothing to do to become a Saint but to let oneself be carried as a boat on a flowing stream. David compares the just man to a tree planted by the running waters (Ps. i. 3); each wavelet which passes by comes to caress and moisten its roots, so that not only the fruits of this tree are beautiful and full of flavour, but even its leaves are everlasting: it is the image of what you are. Everything for you is grace, light, help, encouragement. Your sun never sets, and your life has no winter. You receive incessantly, and incessantly you give. You give to God many things, and things that are among the best, and you give them to Him much better than they were.* Secular people give Him their fruits; happy are they if they give them to Him!

* S. Thom. 2da. 2dæ. Quæst. lxxviii. art. 6.

As for you, you give your sap, your roots, your power; in a word, you give everything; and, giving Him all for ever, there is more of love in each of these innumerable gifts, which are derived from the first gift. Consequently what a value they must have! What graces they suppose, and what increase of grace they produce! Had a faithful Religious but ordinary fervour, she would grow in holiness every instant, and make the Angels exclaim with admiration, "Who is she that goeth up by the desert, as a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices?" (Cant. iii. 6). While waiting for its true country, which is heaven, love is nowhere so happy as with you. And what is true of love is, in due proportion, true also of all the other virtues. The Religious State is to them what hot countries are to flowers, or those hothouses in which the inhabitants of the North cultivate them. It is in your life especially that those steps of ascension of which the Prophet speaks are divinely disposed, which, beginning in this valley of tears, end in those heights above, where we shall see the face of God (Psalm lxxxiii. 6). You go on blossoming like flowers, expanding more and more till you reach the bosom of your Father in heaven. You are sacred reservoirs, which, under the action of those Divine torrents (I mean the effusions of the Holy Ghost), become continually deeper and more ample. You are the images of Jesus, ever becoming more and more perfect; mirrors, more and more pure, of the Divinity. How great, then, is the security of those who lead your holy life! Who are better guarded and protected? Who can walk with a firmer tread? Who have more ample stores at their command? Who have less to fear that the lamp will be wanting oil? Who can be more certain to reach the end of his journey, and to be ready to receive the final visit of the Spouse?

To embrace this state, the Saints say, is the most certain mark of being among the number of the elect.* In truth, who is more sure than a Religious always to walk in the right way; never to depart from the holy will of God; to be the faithful earth in which that will is done, even as it is in heaven? God alone invented your life; He Himself founded it: it is the life which, by preference, He led Himself when He was on earth. Besides, you remain in everything under the control of that Church which is His witness and His organ. It is the Church which approves your rules and constitutions; it is she who in various ways delegates your Superiors; it is she who watches over them, and is their judge. Who better than you can utter that cry of the Saints of old, "O Lord, Thou art my portion?" (Psalms xx. 5; cxxxii. 26; cxviii. 57). For whom has this cry a signification which is more profound, more extended, more magnificent? Who better than you can say also, "The Lord ruleth me. . . . I shall want nothing?" (Psalm xxii. 1). Yes, the Lord; He Who reigns in the height of heaven, but Who, in His mercy, renders Himself present for you on this earth, and, having clothed Himself in a human form, has become your guide, your guardian, your servant, in making Himself your Father and your Mother. Is there any one, then, like you in having Gods so accessible, so near, and so familiar? (Deut. iv. 7). Put faith and love into your obedience, and then all your sanctity, and, consequently, your salvation, consists in your obeying these domestic Gods. Join to this obedience those priceless assurances that are furnished you by all you have around you—by good examples; the interchange of prayers; the communication of thoughts, of feelings, of graces; and by that mutual union and charity of which

* P. Jerom. Platus. De bono Relig. pars. 1a. c. 32.

the Wise Man writes: "It is better, therefore, that two should be together than one, for they have the advantage of their society; if one fall, he shall be supported by the other. Woe to him that is alone; for when he falleth he hath none to lift him up; and if two lie together, they shall warm one another: how shall one alone be warmed? And if a man prevail against one, two shall withstand him —a three-fold cord is not so easily broken" (Eccles. iv. 9).

Jesus said the same thing, but with a divine addition; for "Where there are two or three gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (St. Matt. xviii. 20). Saint Catherine of Sienna had, then, good reason to write: "The Religious Life is a most safe vessel, which the Holy Spirit Himself has built, and which He Himself conducts to the port."* In truth, a faithful Religious has already one foot in Paradise; and it is of him that it is said most excellently by St. Paul that "his conversation and his life are in heaven" (Philipp. iii. 20).

Again, how great is your peace, its abundance, and its victorious firmness, in the midst of the agitations, the temptations, and the inevitable crosses of this world! "O my God, in peace in the self-same I will sleep and I will rest, for Thou, O Lord, hast singularly settled me in hope" (Ps. iv. 9).

The religious soul, then, is truly happy. It is of faith that the virgin is more happy than the married woman (1 Cor. vii. 40); and if this is already true of a virgin who lives in the world, how much more true is it of one who has consecrated herself entirely to God in the Religious Life! She has visibly all the beatitudes together. She certainly makes one among the poor in spirit, whose is the kingdom of Heaven; and among the meek, who

* Dialogues, ch. 158.

possess the earth; and among the divine mourners, who will be divinely consoled; and among those who hunger after justice, whom God Himself will fill; and among those merciful, to whom God will show mercy; and among those clean of heart, who will see God; and among the peace-makers, who are His children. And if this is already the heritage of each one among you, may we not add the joys of that life in community of which David sang, in words so often repeated since: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity?" (Ps. cxxxii. 1). Yes, true joys are to be found in the Religious Life, and, on the sole condition that you comprehend them sufficiently to render yourselves worthy of them, these joys are truly yours—joys so splendid, that they reveal God Himself, and disclose His very Heart; joys so high, that they detach from all things else; so pure, that they sanctify; so faithful, that they never deceive; joys so profound, that they never can be violated; so exalted and efficacious, that they sweeten every bitterness, and make ineffable delights flow into the most heartrending griefs; joys, in a word, so durable, that they last for ever, and begin on earth only to receive their consummation in heaven.

Such is your hundredfold, a part of your hundredfold; for I do not flatter myself that I have described it all. "And after that," said Jesus, "you shall have eternal life" (St. Matt. xix. 29). Others, doubtless, thanks be to God, shall have eternal life also; but you, in what a degree, at what an elevation, in what proportion, shall you have it! Such will be on high your share, that were it all put off till then, and the whole of your life were passed in labour and in pain, you would not have paid for the joy of possessing that share even for a single hour; and it shall be

for ever and ever; as you taste it, you shall be inebriated with it, with a sovereign right to it, though it be a grace; with a liberty which nothing can diminish, a leisure nothing shall trouble, in an immensity of glory, and in the bosom of an abyss of peace!

You will now better understand both the greatness and the beauty, the sanctity and importance, of your state, and the immortal attraction which it has always had, and that it will have, even to the end, for a portion of the Christian people; and the tender predilection of the Church for it, the protection with which she surrounds it, the privileges which she grants it; and, in a word, all the enthusiastic praises that the Saints of all times have been pleased to bestow upon it. I cannot resist the desire I have to quote one of these commendations. I choose it among a thousand, not only on account of its peculiar beauty, but because it seems to me to sum up, in a manner, the doctrine contained in this instruction. I extract it from an admirable address that Saint Gregory Nazianzen made to the Emperor Julian. "Do you see," he said to Julian, "those beings placed on the earth, and living above everything that is earthly; mingled with mankind, and greater than all that is human; subject and yet free; dependent and yet kings; having nothing in this world, and yet possessing that which is above and beyond the world? Do you see those beings whom mortification renders immortal, and whom death unites to God; strangers to covetousness, and burning with that love of which nothing disturbs the quiet? They have the light in its source, and they already see it sending forth its rays. Their chants are the canticles of the Angels; the night to them is as the day, for they watch in the night; and their spirit, already ravished into heaven, takes

thither its upward flight, to lose itself in God. They are pure, and yet they are for ever purifying themselves; for they assign no limits to their progress, as their aim is to be deified without measure. They have but little to cover them; but their robe is incorruptible. You would say that they live alone, and are solitaires; and yet they form a heavenly society. They are severely interdicted from all pleasure; but the delights in which their souls are plunged defy all description. Their tears are a deluge which drowns the sins and washes away the defilements of the world. Their hands, stretched out in prayer, extinguish conflagrations, lull asleep the wild beasts of the forest, blunt the edge of the sharpest sword, put whole armies to flight, and they will end, O Emperor, and be sure of it, in overcoming even your impiety."*

I have only to be silent after these eloquent words; but as for you, who have the grace, the honour, and the happiness of being among the number of those of whom the Saint, in these glowing words, so powerfully and beautifully speaks, have more than ever at heart to walk, as St. Paul exhorts you, in a way worthy of so great and holy a vocation. (Ephes. iv. 1.)

* S. Greg. Naz. Orat. iv. contra Julian, cap. 71.

ON FAITH.

ALL the holy relations which our Lord came to establish between us and His Father, have faith for their foundation, and they all proceed from it as from their principle. We cannot read three pages of the Holy Gospels without seeing that they formally announce this grand truth. Jesus demands faith of every one. He demands it before everything else. He does not demand it only in the way of desire, or under the form of a counsel; He claims it as a debt; it has also, in His discourses, all the characters of a necessary means. There are very important laws, from which He dispenses in certain cases. He reserves to Himself the right of conferring the grace which, as an ordinary rule, He attaches to certain Sacraments; He reserves to Himself the right of conferring it without any intermediate agent; but as regards faith it is not so. There is no dispensation from it; nothing can supply its place—neither sincerity, nor any moral virtue; still less can science, or genius, or all that men call human glory. Had we received from God it matters not what grace, whether actual or gratuitous; had we, by the force of eloquence and of miracles, converted whole cities and baptised entire peoples, yet if we had not faith we should not be the

object of the complacency of our Heavenly Father, nor have access unto Him. "Without faith," saith St. Paul, "it is impossible to please God" (Heb. xi. 6).

God can doubtless always give this faith. He can recall it to life in the soul, in which it lies dead, or produce it where there is not as yet even its germ. He can do so by any kind of means He pleases, or without any means whatever. He can give it to one who is full of life, were it only by interrupting, as by a thunderclap, a career of sin and impiety; He can give it when one is at the point of death; but if He does not give it, such a one, whatever he may be in other respects, remains for ever excluded from the Divine life, by a necessity analagous to that which excludes from human life one who is yet unborn.

Strange fact! This necessity to which it pleases God to subject us, we might say that He submits to, Himself. Where He finds faith—though wherever he finds it it is Himself Who has given it—He seems enraptured, so as even to admire it, and to wonder at it. "O woman, great is thy faith" (St. Matt. xv. 28) He said to the woman of Canaan; and, on hearing the words of the Centurion, He exclaimed, "Amen; I say to you I have not found so great faith, not even in Israel" (St. Luke vii. 9). And when this faith reaches a certain degree, it seems that it does not allow Him, as it were, to be Master of Himself: it carries Him away, it obliges Him, and, so to speak, it even subjects Him, to it. Whatever it asks it obtains from Him; whatever it wishes it makes Him do, were it even to pluck up a mountain from its base and hurl it into the sea (St. Matt. xvii. 19); and, on the contrary, when there is a want of faith it renders Him, Who can do always all things, powerless. "He could not," says St. Mark, "do any

mighty works there because of their unbelief" (St. Mark vi. 5, 6).

It is clear, then, that generous and anxious as He is to give us this supernatural wealth, which St. Paul calls "the abundant riches of His grace" (Ephes. ii. 7), Jesus is careful to furnish us with this indispensable foundation. Thus, it is the great employment of His life. From the beginning of the world God laboured at this work. At the same time, with reason, He put faith into the soul of the first man. Sin, without destroying faith, obscured and weakened it. Immediately God propped, as it were, this tottering virtue. He supports it by means of a new revelation; and not only new, but, in certain respects, a more extensive one. And because, notwithstanding this help, faith was continually threatened with ruin, He was ever taking means to prevent it. For this end he makes use of the Patriarchs, of Moses, of the High Priests, of the Judges, of Kings, of the sacred writers, of those who worked great miracles, and of Prophets. He also employed in this work the Holy Angels. To say the truth, there is nothing in all creation He did not make use of for this great and important object. Finally, He comes Himself in the Person of the Word (Heb. i. 1); and all that he does from that time, from His birth even to His death—His many discourses and prodigies, His incomparable virtues, His many and signal benefits, His excessive labours, His humiliations and unheard-of sufferings—all tend to this one end—to found, to illustrate, and propagate faith. All His mission is in that one word. He comes to render witness to His Father; and if this witness is received, it is enough. "This is the work of the Father," He said Himself, "that you believe in Him Whom He hath sent" (St. John vi. 29), the true Son of God, and also in the Divine Father Who sent Him.

He does not regard His long and painful journey at an end till He has done all to obtain for the human race a right to this faith; and, going forth from the tomb to confirm faith by a last miracle, He does not quit the world till after He has finished His arrangements with His Apostles, that this faith may be carried to the end of the earth, and be preserved to the end of time.

Here, then, is for us the great question—that of life or of death, of heaven or of hell; that of a destiny accomplished, or a destiny which has failed. "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned" (St. Mark xvi. 16). Whatever path we may take, and whatever the state may be which we embrace, faith must precede all, order all, give life to all. Our life in Christ is like a tree of many branches, of ample foliage; whose flowers are bright and of sweet perfume; whose fruits are delicious, durable, and countless. Now, the root of this tree is faith, and heaven itself is but the final development of its sap. In the order of the Christian, that is to say of the divine, life, faith is the first principle. It is at once the virtue which begets us, and the mark that we are born in it. It characterises, it distinguishes, it designates us. Thus we are called "the Faithful." We are the children of God: the Church is His family. Every family has a name which is handed down with the blood, and which enables the members which compose, it to recognise one another, and which distinguishes them from strangers. This august mark could not be wanting to the Christian family. We are not here speaking, you understand, of that individual name which, under the gradual power of grace, and the influence of predestination, is to become hereafter, in heaven, for each of us his proper and eternal name. We are speaking of that common name

that we all bear as Christians, and by which we are known among men. There is a name which indicates a man's rank; it is a name of honour, but first of all, it is His right. If, in the order of nature, men have a specific name, it is that of reasonable beings; thus separating man from the animals, who do not reason; and from Angels, who do not exercise this faculty, because their intelligence goes straight to the bottom of things, without the laborious process of argumentation and discourse, as with us. For us Christians, we are not called by this title, although assuredly we have this faculty, and are pre-eminently reasonable beings. We are called, as I have said, *the Faithful;* and you will see how, in the intellectual order, this places us far above the natural level, not only of mankind in general, but of the Angels themselves.

This subject of faith is of the greatest importance. Our Lord likens His Disciple to a man who, wishing to build a house, founded it upon a firm rock (St. Matt. vii. 24). This firm rock is faith. Itself built on the foundations of Sion, as the Prophet Isaias describes it (Isaias xxviii. 16), it borrows all its solidity from that immovable Rock on which all things rest, and which is Christ Jesus (1 Cor. iii. 1, &c.). Whatever may be our course afterwards, here we set out. "It is vain," saith the Prophet David, "for you to rise before the light" (Ps. cxvi. 2); and Jesus, completing the lesson, tells us: "If a man walk in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of day; but if he walk in the night he stumbleth, because the light is not in him" (St. John xi. 9). It is faith which is the true sun that rises on all the holy career we have to accomplish. Henceforward we run no risk of walking by chance, with a timid or even a hesitating step; for our light will not be what St. Paul calls, "man's

day" (1 Cor. iv. 3)—a day, that is, which is full of shadow and of uncertainty; it will be the true day of God, that which God makes to rise on all whom He looks upon—the splendid and the infallible day of His own thoughts and of His own judgments.

Believing and understanding these magnificent theories of the Christian and of the religious life, your souls have experienced a great attraction and a great fear—an attraction to devote your time and your strength to realise so beautiful a model; and a fear of not being able to succeed. Behold, then, the great secret which, while calming, if not destroying, this fear, should favour this attraction and ensure the success of the enterprise—faith! Proceeding from this great light, it becomes a source of great strength. "Martha," said Jesus to the sister of Lazarus, "did I not say to thee, if thou wilt believe thou shalt see the glory of God?" (St. John xi. 40). Have this faith yourselves, the faith of God, as our Lord said (St. Mark xi. 22); and this glory which I have shown you, this glory of the Christian and religious sanctity, you shall see in yourselves; for it is the express word of Jesus: "All things are possible to him that believeth" (St. Matt. ix. 22).

We shall endeavour to show you what is this faith, its foundation, its necessity, its nature, its greatness, its marvellous capacity, and its compass. There does not appear to us to be a better means of attaching you to it, and of confirming and perfecting it in you, than by giving you the true and complete idea of it. Afterwards, we shall endeavour to show you how, having received of God this inestimable gift, you should make use of it on all occasions, and look at everything in the brightness of its light.

I.

There is no one among you who does not remember that Tabernacle of which God furnished the plan to Moses, and which became the exterior centre of the Jewish religion. This plan which, with good reason, passed for holy, was very religiously copied, both in that incomparable Temple which Soloman built later on, and in the other Temple which, at different intervals, was built on the ruins of the first, and which still remained in the time of our Lord. This Tabernacle, or this Temple, was divided into three parts, all holy assuredly, but of an unequal sanctity. First, there was an exterior part, which completely enclosed the two others, which was called the "*parvis*" or outer court. As to its exterior dimensions, it was much more ample but by far less sacred. The people assembled in it to pay to God the principal duties of their religion, and to assist in the sacrifices. In the part of this outer court, the nearest to the sanctuary, and opposite to the eastern gates which gave access to it, there was the Altar of Holocausts. It was the only mode of worship that, according to rule, took place there; and again, in the Temple of Solomon this altar was erected in the special outer court, reserved to the Priests, and where no laics were permitted to enter.* After the outer court came the sanctuary of which we

* Compare Kings iii. 8 and 9. There were three courts (apart from the Holy of Holies)—that of the Gentiles, that of the Israelites, and that of the Priests. It was in the last that the Altar of Holocausts was placed. The Israelites who wished to offer sacrifices could lead their victims up to the interior, but they could not pass a wall of separation which cut this outer court in two, and their offering accepted, it was their duty to retire.—See Calmet. Dict. of the Bible: art. Temple.

are speaking, and which was called the *Holy Place.* It was there that was preserved the seven-branched candlestick, whose lights were burning day and night, the table of the Bread of Proposition, and the Golden Altar, on which perfumes were offered. The Priests and the Levites alone could penetrate into this second enclosure.

Finally, beyond this sanctuary there was a part still more holy, which was called the *Holy of Holies*, or, according to the energetic language of the Hebrews, the "*Sanctity of Sanctities.*" There were deposited the Ark of the Covenant, with the Tables of the Law—that is to say, the sacrament of the covenant of God with His people, and the authentic conditions which guaranteed their observance. A thick and magnificent veil, made of hyacinth and purple, and supported by rich columns, enclosed the Holy of Holies, into which no one could enter except the High Priest, and that only once a year. In the seventh month (Lev. xvi., Heb. ix. 7), on the day marked out by God Himself for the great expiation of Israel, the successor of Aaron, robed in his most precious vestments, after having purified himself, and having purified the Priests, the people, and the different parts of the Temple, by sprinkling them with blood, took in his hand the golden censer, and, surrounded by a cloud of sweet-smelling incense, advanced alone into this awful place.

Now, this Temple, of which God Himself was the Architect, was the exact image of the world, such as the Creator had conceived it in His allwise goodness, and such as He had realised it in the free exercise of His almighty power.* We could not know it otherwise; we

* More or less understood, this idea was already part of the sacred science of the Jews; and we read expressly in Flavius Josephus: "This division of the Tabernacle (Temple) into three parts, was a

might, perhaps, have guessed it; for it is clear, and even necessary, that the character of God should be marked in all His works; and if there is in the Divine nature one striking and essential mark, assuredly it is that of unity and harmony. At all events, it has pleased God that the plan with which He constructed the Universe should be the one after which He ordered the Temple to be built. And there is no need to be very learned in sacred science to comprehend that the Temple built later on in the series of ages, preceded the world in the order of the Divine conceptions. God was the model of the Temple, and the Temple the model of the world.

In truth, taken altogether, the creation has also three enclosures—the outward court, the sanctury, and that which is beyond and above all the rest, the Holy of Holies.

The outer court, the least reserved, the least noble, is the whole world of bodies. You know how vast is its extent; yet the study of the celestial bodies shows us that it is necessarily limited, though bordering on the illimitable, and containing a countless number of bodies.

The sanctuary is more interior, more august, and incomparably more divine. In it are the vast number of souls; for, however they may be bound to bodies, they yet preserve their own nature, and therefore continue in their own rank. In that rank, also, are the Angels—naturally more beautiful, more grand, more mighty than souls, but only forming a more elevated section in the category of spirits. In that rank is God; not only as He is everywhere—by the presence of His immensity, by His creative action, and His providence—but as an object of

figure of the world; the most interior, the Holy of Holies, represented the heaven where God dwells."—Antiq. Judaiques. lib. iii., ch. 5.

knowledge, of love, and of religion; He is there as the principle of our origin, as the end at which we ought to arrive. He is there as Creator and Lord, to whom we owe a pious respect; as Legislator, having a right to our humble obedience; as a Benefactor, rightfully claiming a lively and sincere gratitude. Finally, He is there as Judge, and consequently as rewarder and as avenger. He reveals Himself there by His works, and communicates Himself there by all kinds of gifts. It is an order purely natural, where each being remains in its proper place, and in the essential relations which result from its natural conditions. There is in it much of life; there are in it beautiful lights, magnificent movements, also a marvellous progress; we find in it, in a measure, justice, love, devotedness, and virtue. Each individual in it has its development, but only in its own kind; it lives but by its own sap, under the benediction of Him by Whom that sap has been given; it mounts up, it flourishes, it fructifies, but in an exclusive leaning on its first root. It is the human or angelic nature, existing in greater or less degrees of perfection; but it is always and only this nature.

Now, beyond this second world, which, though it is so splendid in itself, is for us an invisible world, there is, in fact, a third, infinitely more secret, more elevated, more divine: it is the Holy of Holies. It is a place which is full of mysteries, the place of the greatest mysteries, the home of the supernatural, the source, the centre, the heart of the true religion, the all-heavenly treasure of glory and of grace. It is, as it were, the sublime threshold, where the adorable and inaccessible Trinity, the Three Divine Persons, have Their dwelling in order to manifest, to reveal, and to diffuse Themselves exteriorly. It is the region the most elevated, the highest firmament, and the

thrice holy sanctury, where the unspeakable mystery of Jesus Christ, the mystery of our sanctification and of our deification, has its seat, its home, and its consummation. Jesus occupies this place; He fills it. We might say, with St. Ignatius of Antioch, that He is there alone; but that does not exclude anything nor any person; for Jesus Christ, you have already seen, is God, who embraces the entire world, and He is also the entire world, which embraces God.*

Such is the Holy of Holies of the temple, and thence it is that justly the whole universe is a true temple. In truth, from the moment when God resolved to become thus personally the Head and the foundation of His work, it is clear that the universe, in its entirety, must be singularly modified by it. Not only does this inward and secret world—being the most excellent of the three, and primal in its origin—support and contain the two other worlds, but, further, it exercises over them a sovereign, total, and incessant influence. Behold the face of man—His brow, His lips, His eyes; all this, taken in itself, has its own excellence and beauty. But when the breath of the Creator placed a soul in those organs, what did they immediately become? What majesty clothed that brow! what graces adorned those lips! what fire flashed from those eyes! Nothing is destroyed or absorbed; all is transfigured. Now, this is but a feeble image of what the presence of the *Holy of Holies* effects in the whole edifice which encloses it, and is subject to it,—I mean

* Præstantior est summus Pontifex (Jesus Christus) cui soli credita sunt Sancta Sanctorum, cui soli secreta Dei sunt tradita, qui est ipse janua Patris, per quam ingrediuntur Abraham et Isaac et Jacob et Prophetæ, et Apostoli et Ecclesia: omnia hæc ad unionem cum Deo.—Epist. ad Philadelph. ix. Edit. Mign.

the Divine transformations which are caused in the whole order of nature by the presence of the Supernatural. It does not cancel any part of this order; it does not diminish aught; on the contrary, it raises it, it gives it a further extension, it perfects it. It assigns to those who live in it a new end, and one infinitely more sublime; it imposes a law infinitely more holy; it confers on them a dignity and a value, to which of themselves they could not attain; it gives them, in fine, a heavenly beauty. But it follows that, in fact, nothing in the natural order remains purely natural; that the supernatural is the foundation of all; that it is even the foundation of all things; and that, as we have told you, the universe is a holy place, and the entire creation but one true temple.

Now, if such is the Divine plan, we may conceive that in intelligent and reasonable creatures, God has Himself disposed that they should have powers exactly proportioned to the three orders of realities which this plan supposes and includes, and with which these creatures ought to enter into relation. And as the foundation of the relations of a being that really thinks, is the knowledge that that being has of them, that which God puts into us, before all, is the power to know what these three enclosures contain.

Thus God has acted. The exterior and interior senses are the powers by means of which we naturally perceive what is contained in the first part of the temple, which we have called the outer court, and which is the abode of matter. Reason is the faculty which opens to us the second enclosure—I mean, the natural world of spirits. It understands the inward meaning of what the eyes see, and raises itself to the realities which nothing corporal

could signify, and which have no analogy with what may fall under the knowledge of sense. Is this all? If there were but two parts in the universal work (and it might have been thus, since the supernatural institution is a free act and a pure grace), as there would then have been but two objects to know, there would not have been more than two principles of knowledge within us. In truth, if God never fails to procure what is necessary, we never see Him do anything either useless or to no purpose. Supposing, then, that, as the impious affirm with audacity, because they desire it with passion, there is no supernatural, it is perfectly clear that sense and reason would be sufficient for our humanity, for its duties, for its necessities; and not only for the life in this world, but also for the life to come. Yes, on this hypothesis—on the one condition of always employing his senses and his reason in truth, in wisdom, and in justice—man would attain his end. But if, as it is very certain, there is a supernatural order; if, as we cannot doubt, either as Christians or as reasonable beings, God has willed that between this supernatural order and ourselves relations should exist; if He has, in these relations, established our last end; if He has, consequently, made it the law of our being to consider this our last end; if He has attached to it all our moral life—He must necessarily open in our souls a new source of knowledge, a superior principle of perception and of understanding, which should be precisely to this sublime object what the senses and reason are to the objects with which they correspond. Now, this source and this principle is what we call faith.

Doubtless this order, which is in itself quite supernatural, is not so in its expression. Without that it would be for us as if it did not exist; or we must, to attain to it,

not only go beyond our nature, which is a perfection, but change it entirely from top to bottom—that is, we must destroy it, which would be a disorder. From the time, then, that while speaking exteriorly the living word of His own interior life (it is to us that He addresses Himself), He necessarily speaks a language that we can understand. His infinite thoughts, not to consider His intellectual communications, He clothes in finite words—in words known and usual, and whose meaning is perfectly determined beforehand. When God speaks to us thus, each of us can perceive the meaning of His words, and take them in their human sense. God does more, and it becomes Him to do more; for it is not enough that we know what is said: we must know, also, who it is that speaks, and that He who speaks is God. He speaks, then, as God—that is to say, He clothes His words in inimitable expressions. He does not content Himself with shedding upon them that intrinsic beauty which they cannot fail to have, but whose very perfection places them beyond the comprehension of the greater number—He illustrates them; He confirms and brings them into credit with all, by all sorts of works of His Right Hand, and principally by incontestable miracles; so that we may not only reasonably hold them to be Divine, but, without giving the lie to our good sense, or becoming a traitor to our reason, we cannot confound them with what are false. He floods them with His own personal lights, and by showing Himself, He demonstrates the miracles to be His.

Does it follow that the senses and reason suffice to enable us to penetrate into this last and highest sanctuary? No, certainly; they can give us, it is true, a physical or historic knowledge of Divine facts, which are

supernatural. It must needs be that they do so; it is their highest employment. Their concurrence here is indispensable; without their aid, the act of faith would be radically impossible; they are the soil in which this act germinates, and which serves it as a support and mainstay. But to comprehend any supernatural truth with a real, commanded, meritorious perception is beyond the range of the most exquisite senses and the most practised reason. They are utterly incapable of seeing such a supernatural truth.* It is only the eye of faith that can see it. Faith alone can give us knowledge; and not only is it necessary to make us cling to this revelation of a supernatural truth, whatever it may be—that is to say, to the Divine reality announced to us in human language—but more, we should not be able, without the grace which causes us to believe it, to yield, as it is fitting we should, to the proofs on which it leans, nor accept as truly divine, and consequently in an efficacious way, the miracles which corroborate it. We might say, as the Jews: "This miracle is manifest; we cannot deny it;"

* Without faith, the most intelligent and the most learned man in the world remains purely a natural man, or what St. Paul calls an animal man, and of whom he says (1 Cor. ii. 11), "That he does not perceive the things of God." This man may be able, it is true, to perceive certain truths which relate to God; it is sufficient for this that he has the possession of reason; but what is of the Spirit of God—that is to say, the Divine, a matter of revelation, the divinely supernatural—this he cannot know without the Spirit of God. St. Paul says, in the same place, that as only the spirit of a man knows the things of a man, so the things that are of God no man knoweth but the Spirit of God. This Spirit of God is faith, which is God's gift. Any other idea but this is but folly—in fact it is nonsense. St. Paul adds, that "The sensual or animal man perceives not those things that are of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him."—*Ibid.* 14.

and at the same time add, as they did: "Let us threaten them, that they speak no more in this name to any man" (Acts iv. 16). It is to acknowledge ourselves to be conquered; it is not at all to believe, and still less to be converted.

Were the human mind otherwise capable of this complete adhesion to the testimony which God gives by miracles to His own Word, there would still remain the heart, which has its share—and, in truth, a very great share—in this belief; for it is a fact of experience that no one believes who does not wish to believe; and although the faith is especially an act of the intelligence, it supposes, at its root, an act of the will, of the whole soul consenting to it.* To make, then, an act of faith, man must have a double grace—the grace which purifies, enlightens, elevates, directs, sustains, and strengthens the mind; and the grace which touches, disengages, and simplifies the heart, inclining it to receive a truth from which it knows instinctively that a moral obligation always proceeds. And to make a true believer—that is, a man interiorly capable of receiving the Word of God, and able, by means of this belief, to penetrate into that adorable Holy of Holies, where the greatest secrets are uttered, and where are knit together the unions of heaven—we need much more than an accidental grace, however strong and far-reaching it may be. We must have an infused habit of grace, a formed habit of virtue, a power truly divine, which is the regular and unfailing source of acts really divine; and this divine power is faith.

I spoke to you just now of the Temple. The Temple

* Actus fidei est credere, qui est actus intellectûs determinati ad unum ex imperio voluntatis.—S. Thom. Summ. 2da 2dæ Quæst. iv. art. 1.

of Jerusalem was not the first. It was the copy of another one, which was nearer to the Heart of God, and was no fabric of the hand of man. This typical Temple is Jesus Christ. He Himself affirms it in the Gospel (St. John ii. 19). "Destroy this Temple," our Lord said, "and in three days I will raise it up." Now, this living Temple has also three enclosures. In the blessed days when our Lord was on earth, His senses were the outer court. Everyone could see Jesus, touch, and hear Him speak. Nor had reason any difficulty to penetrate His sanctuary. It was clear to reason, that a soul animated that body, that a spirit moved those lips, and saw by the brightness of those eyes. Reason could also as easily ascertain that this spirit singularly surpassed other spirits; that it had more elevation, greater depth, penetration, and energy; that this soul, in a word, was endowed with marvellous faculties; that it was an immense treasure-house, and, as it were, a harmony of all that could make a soul admired and loved; finally, that this Man, whom they called Jesus, was in all respects, and clearly, an uncommon person. But to pass beyond, and to penetrate even to the Holy of Holies—I mean to the union of His soul with the Word—and, consequently, to come to the knowledge of the mystery of His personal Divinity—this was a thing impossible to mere reason alone; and it was so important that the whole world should know this impossibility, that Jesus willed to declare it Himself in the most solemn manner.

One day, having assembled His Disciples, He asked them what "men" said of Him. Observe the word "men." Our Lord meant to imply by men those who live according to nature, and who know and appreciate only the knowledge they gain by their senses and their

reason. The Disciples replied, "Master, some say John the Baptist, and some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the Prophets"—a man divine by his mission, divine by his power, and even by his sanctity, but clearly only a man, and nothing else but a man. "And you," said Jesus again to them, "but whom do *you* say that I am?"—you whom I have taken from among men, you who see further, and live in a higher region than they. Then Peter, the first witness, and the first confessor, head of all believers, and universal doctor—Peter, in the name of the whole Church, cried out, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"—that is to say, the Messiah promised to our fathers, the Word born before all time, and Who came down from heaven in order to give us eternal life. Faith had led the Apostle where reason had not been able to lead others. It opened to him all the hidden mystery of Jesus, and by this means it led him into the inmost sense of things. Our Lord takes notice of this confession of faith; He congratulates Peter on account of it. But as it was necessary that everyone should know, that if God alone was able to place before us so excellent an object, He alone also was able to create in us the power of perceiving it—referring the honour of the Apostle's testimony, to whom it of right belonged, to Him Who had inspired it—Jesus, answering, said to him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father Who is in heaven" (St. Matt. xvi. 17).

You can easily comprehend now what faith is. It is the Divine crowning of our intelligence—a diadem of heavenly light, with which the all-loving hand of God girds our brow invisibly; a marvellous supplement to our mental insufficiencies; an immense extension given to

our spiritual boundaries; a superhuman energy, added to our own first energies; and, as it were, the prolongation in God of our moral being. It is our intellect brought into some proportion with the inward life of the Infinite; our real participation in the essential knowledge which God has of Himself; the key of unspeakable idioms,—it is the place and the means of our immediate conversations with the most Holy Trinity.

St. Paul, speaking of wisdom, which is nothing else, in reality, but the Word Incarnate Jesus Christ, says that, being one in itself, it is therefore manifold. (Ephes. iii. 10). Faith, being the sense within us corresponding with this Divine wisdom, is, like it, one and manifold. I mean to say that, in its transcendent simplicity it contains super-eminently the different modes of perception which God has apportioned to our various senses, interior and exterior.

It is a true ear which, divinely opened in the soul of a creature of earth, allows it to comprehend, or rather gives it the radical power and truly the right to hear, the secrets of heaven, and to assist at the counsels of the Most High. It hears much more than the words of God—I mean it hears those words which create and govern the world, and those which create the Church and direct it in all her ways. It hears the Word, uncreated and essential. It hears God speak Himself, to Himself, in His Infinite language, singing, in the manner which cannot be named, the chant which is peculiar to Himself, which is nothing else than the constituting each of the Faithful a witness of the ineffable generation of the Word.

The faith is also an eye. This word that God speaks to faith is a very clear and bright light. As a word, it requires an ear; as the light, it demands an eye. The world

always remains, here below, the eye of a God, in his birth or in his childhood. But whatever may be these shadows, they are not the night. They never get darker and darker, as the shadows of evening. On the contrary, they are always lessening, as it is written: "The path of the just is a shining light, which goeth forwards and increaseth, even to perfect day" (Prov. iv. 18). Finally, St. Paul speaks of it continually in his Epistles. He says that the Gospel—the word of faith, the word of Christ and of His Apostles—is a true illumination, the illumination of the glory of Jesus, Who "is the Image of God" (2 Cor. iv. 4); the illumination which makes us skilful in the knowledge of the Glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ; the illumination "which hath brought to light life and incorruption" (2 Tim. i. 10). And this is the reason, also, why the primitive Christians gave the name of *light* or of *illumination** to that great sacrament of baptism by which God is wont to "enlighten the eyes of our heart" (Eph. i. 18, as the Apostle says, "that we may know what the hope of His calling," and the other marvels of His grace. For this illumination is, in other words, nothing else but [illegible]

There is equal ground for saying that faith is a [illegible] which lays hold of and takes possession; a foot [illegible] and firm, that no exercise can tire and no height [illegible] or, if you like another simile better, it is a [illegible] stretched wing, which enables the soul to [illegible] of space, and to soar unalarmed to [illegible]

Regarded on the side of God, faith is [illegible] makes of our intelligence; but, with [illegible] intelligent hand we place on God [illegible] perfections, His blessings, in order [illegible]

* S. Justin. Apolog.—Clement. Alex. [illegible] Catech.—Greg. Nyss. orat. cat. 32, [illegible]

mately and entirely our own. St. Paul doubtless desired *the intuitive vision* when he said: "Not as though I had *already attained, or were* already perfect, but I follow after, *if I may by any means* apprehend wherein I am also apprehended by Christ Jesus" (Philipp. iii. 12). But what he asked for first was the plenitude and the perfection of faith. We cannot insist too much on the profound reality of these things, still so hidden from our sight, but of which faith renders us the masters. The greater part of our sins, and certainly the greater number of our spiritual infirmities, come from the fact that we are not sufficiently convinced of their existence. Here is the principle of that distrust of which St. Paul announces to us the dangers when he says, that it delivers those who abandon themselves to it to the operations of Satan (Ephes. ii. 2). Certainly our point of departure is very real: this ground on which we tread is very sure; the visible medium in which we live is very real. But how much more excellent is that region of higher things, which is the term of our voyage! St. Peter, having had the grace of seeing for a few moments the splendours of the Hand of Jesus glorified, found afterwards, in comparison, the light of the sun but pale and artificial.* And so how all here on earth appears unreal, superficial, and vain to one who has entered by faith into the land of the supernatural! It is there we find the true substance, that is to say, what is beyond all, what sustains and contains all. Thus St. Paul says that faith, being "the evidence of things that appear not, is in its object the substance of things to be hoped for" (Heb. xi. 1). It is a world of principles. There are all the exordiums of God and what the Scripture calls "the beginning of His ways" (Prov. viii. 22). There are all the roots of

* The Life, written by himself, chap. xxviii.

[illegible] is also an actual gift, and Abraham can begin at [illegible] "Arise," God says, "and walk through [illegible] length and in the breadth thereof, for I [illegible] in fact, Abode of the Divine Word. [illegible] and beginning his [illegible] in the heart of this region of [illegible] Hebron where afterwards [illegible] [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible] the Lord God [illegible].

[illegible]

able, who have received the Spirit, which searcheth all things, "even the deep things of God?" (1 Cor. ii. 10).

"What will you do, spouse of Jesus Christ, O faithful and loving soul?"* said the learned St. Bernard, in his commentary on the Canticle of Canticles. "Will you venture, are you able, to enter into this sanctuary, so holy, so secret, where we see the Son in the Father, and the Father in the Son? Yes, you may, if you have faith, for 'all things are possible for him who has faith.' Only believe, and you have already found what you seek. In truth," he continues, "what does faith not find? It reaches the unapproachable, it discovers the unknown, it comprehends the unsearchable, it has the secret of arriving at the end of things, and it has but to dilate its bosom to hold even eternity in its embrace."

Therefore it is that we may call faith also a mouth, that mouth by which the Word said to David: "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it" (Ps. lxxx. 11). It is one more than contemplate God—it feeds upon Him. Everyone knows that faith makes one speak with incomparable eloquence, and irresistible force, and with marvellous success. "I have believed, therefore have I spoken," said David (Ps. cxv. 1). Faith, then, is the apostolate; it has changed the face of the world before it enables us to speak, it makes us live, eat, drink—in a word, do all that we

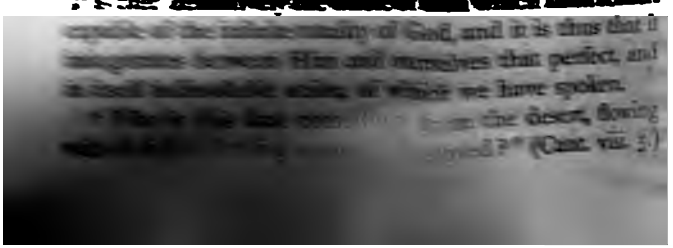
* Quid facies, O sponsa? Putas, poteris ingerere audes vel vales huic tam sanctuario ut Filium in Patre, Patrem potes credere, "omnia possibilia invenisti. . . . Quid non invenia: findit: hendit ignota, comprehendit ipsam denique æternitatem circumcludit.—Serm. lxxvi. in

The Holy Word of God is a breath, which passes into us, and is as an atmosphere of life, by which we are enveloped. "The words that I have spoken to you," said our Lord, "are spirit and life" (St. John vi. 6). Faith inhales this breath, and gives it forth into this atmosphere. The Holy Word of God is also food. Jesus calls it in His Gospel both food and drink. The breasts of God are the Humanity of Christ. It is by them that we get at the invisible substance, and it is of this holy food and drink that the Spouse was thinking in the Canticle of Canticles, when she said, "Thy breasts are better than wine" (Cant. i. 1). Everywhere the preaching of the Gospel in the Scripture is likened to a feast: God serves the guests Himself, and the guests are the Faithful. To receive truth, then, is a true eating, and by this act a real Communion is made. By it the light of God becomes our light, His wisdom our wisdom: His knowledge our knowledge, His Spirit our spirit: His life our life: and thus, as S. Thomas calls faith "the commencement of eternal life."*

So, again, does Scripture speak of faith as a betrothal, and constitutes a marriage. "I will espouse thee to Me for ever, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord," says God to the human soul (Osee ii. 20). It is, in truth, by His Word that God becomes the Spouse of souls. He espouses souls in the name of His Father, and by the [illegible] of the Holy Spirit; but it is our Lord Who espouses. He is personally the Bridegroom in the Canticle of Canticles. It is He, as Son, for Whom the Father "makes a marriage," to which the Gospel [illegible] of God (St. Matt. xxii. 2), and which

[illegible] iv., art. 2.

[illegible]



mately and entirely our own. St. Paul doubtless desired the intuitive vision when he said: "Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect, but I follow after, if I may by any means apprehend wherein I am also apprehended by Christ Jesus" (Philipp. iii. 12). But what he asked for first was the plenitude and the perfection of faith. We cannot insist too much on the profound reality of these things, still so hidden from our sight, but of which faith renders us the masters. The greater part of our sins, and certainly the greater number of our spiritual infirmities, come from the fact that we are not sufficiently convinced of their existence. Here is the principle of that distrust of which St. Paul announces to us the dangers when he says, that it delivers those who abandon themselves to it to the operations of Satan (Ephes. ii. 2). Certainly our point of departure is very real; this ground on which we tread is very sure; the visible medium in which we live is very real. But how much more excellent is that region of higher things, which is the term of our voyage! St. Teresa, having had the grace of seeing for a few moments the splendours of the Hand of Jesus glorified, found afterwards, in comparison, the light of the sun but pale and artificial.* And so how all here on earth appears unreal, superficial, and vain to one who has entered by faith into the land of the supernatural! It is there we find the true substance—that is to say, what is beyond all, what sustains and contains all. Thus St. Paul says that faith, being "the evidence of things that appear not, is in its object the substance of things to be hoped for" (Heb. xi. 1). It is a world of principles. There are all the exordiums of God, and what the Scripture calls "the beginning of His ways" (Prov. viii. 22). There are all the roots of

* Her Life, written by herself, chap. xxviii.

things—those roots that are all plunged in the Divinity, as in their proper soil. Thence springs forth life; thence mounts up the universal sap of all creation. This world of faith is a true heaven; it is the true firmament, which draws, says David, all its strength from the Word (Ps. xxxiii. 6). It is the kingdom that cannot be moved, of which St. Paul speaks (Heb. xii. 28); and its immovability is truly unspeakable; for it is infinite on two titles, being established, first, on the Divine truth of revelation, and secondly, on the infallible veracity of Him Who reveals.* All here is affirmation, solidity, fulness; all here is Amen. Here everything endures, everything is immortal; for "we who have in us the Divine spirit of faith." Again writes St. Paul: "Look not at the things which are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2. Cor. iv. 13).

And we can always advance in this domain of which faith puts us in possession. It opens out to us a country without limits; it already even hands it over to us, in such a way as to enable and to compel us to travel in it in all directions. "Lift up your eyes," said God to Abraham, the father of all the Faithful, "and look from the place where now thou art—to the north and to the south, to the east and to the west—all the land that thou seest I will give to thee and to thy seed for ever" (Gen. xiii. 14). It is a question of promise. The gift is most certain; God does not retract His sayings; but it is a future gift. "I *will* give it to thee;" and yet, strange to

* S. Denys calls it: "Fides divina quæ est permanens fidelium firmamentum, fundans illos in veritate et in ipsis veritatem, dum indissuasibili identitate simplicem veritatis cognitionem habet rerum credendarum."—De Divin. Nomin., c. vii. 4.

say, it is also an actual gift, and Abraham can begin at once to enjoy it. "Arise," God says, "and walk through the land in the length and in the breadth thereof, for I will give it thee." In fact, docile to the Divine Word, the holy Patriarch strikes his tent, and, beginning his journey, goes to sojourn in the heart of this region of benediction, in the vale of Mambre, wherein afterwards was Hebron; and, as a mark of religion, of love, and of gratitude, he builds there an altar to the Lord (Gen. xiii. 18).

Thus are we placed in regard to the promised land of spirits, which is the supernatural, and which has been revealed to us. We may, and we ought to, penetrate into it more and more, going from brightness to brightness, under the influence and the direction of the Spirit Who presses us forward, and resolved not to halt till we have reached the summit of the heavenly Horeb, and there see the adorable Face of God. Here labour is commanded us, confidence is exacted of us, even boldness is permitted us. "I exhort your faith to love with intelligence," writes St. Augustine to a Christian who has been badly instructed: "be anxious to comprehend." He who, having faith, does not seek to comprehend what he has commenced to believe, shows that he does not know the blessing of faith.* On the condition of remaining humble, and of never banishing respect from our curiosity, what should make us fear, and of what are we not cap-

* Hæc dixerim ut fidem tuam ad amorem intelligentiæ cohorter. . . . Qui verâ ratione quod jam tantummodo credebat intelligit, profectò præponendus est ei qui cupit adhuc intelligere quod credit: si autem nec cupit, et ea quæ intelligenda sunt credenda tantummodo existimat, cui rei fides prosit ignorat. . . . Intellectum verò valde ama.—Epis. cxx. ad Consent.

able, who have received the Spirit, which searcheth all things, "even the deep things of God?" (1 Cor. ii. 10).

"What will you do, spouse of Jesus Christ, O faithful and loving soul?"* said the learned St. Bernard, in his commentary on the Canticle of Canticles. "Will you venture, are you able, to enter into this sanctuary, so holy, so secret, where we see the Son in the Father, and the Father in the Son? Yes, you may, if you have faith, for 'all things are possible for him who has faith.' Only believe, and you have already found what you seek. In truth," he continues, "what does faith not find? It reaches the unapproachable, it discovers the unknown, it comprehends the unsearchable, it has the secret of arriving at the end of things, and it has but to dilate its bosom to hold even eternity in its embrace."

Therefore it is that we may call faith also a mouth, that mouth by which the Word said to David, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it" (Ps. lxxx. 11). It does more than contemplate God—it feeds upon Him. Everyone knows that faith makes one speak with incomparable eloquence, and irresistible force, and with triumphant success. "I have believed, therefore have I spoken," said David (Ps. cxv. 1). Faith, then, is the soul of the apostolate; it has changed the face of the world. But before it enables us to speak, it makes us inhale, taste, eat, drink—in a word, do all that the mouth can do.

* Quid facies, O sponsa? Putas, potes sequi eum illuc? Aut te ingerere audes vel vales huic tam sancto arcano, tamque arcano sanctuario ut Filium in Patre, Patrem intueris in Filio? . . . Si potes credere, "omnia possibilia sunt credenti," . . . crede et invenisti. . . . Quid non inveniat fides? Attingit inaccessa, deprehendit ignota, comprehendit immensa, apprehendit novissima: ipsam denique æternitatem suo illo vastissimo sinu quodammodo circumcludit.—Serm. lxxvi. in Cantica.

The Holy Word of God is a breath, which passes into us, and is as an atmosphere of life, by which we are enveloped. "The words that I have spoken to you," said our Lord, "are spirit and life" (St. John vi. 6). Faith inhales this breath, and gives it forth into this atmosphere. The Holy Word of God is also food. Jesus calls it in His Gospel both food and drink. The breasts of God are the Humanity of Christ. It is by them that we get at the invisible substance, and it is of this holy food and drink that the Spouse was thinking in the Canticle of Canticles, when she said, "Thy breasts are better than wine" (Cant. i. 1). Everywhere the preaching of the Gospel in the Scripture is likened to a feast; God serves the guests Himself, and the guests are the Faithful. The act of faith, then, is a true eating, and by this act a real Communion is made. By it the light of God becomes our light; His wisdom our wisdom; His knowledge our knowledge; His Spirit our spirit; His life our life; and this is why St. Thomas calls faith "the commencement in us of eternal life."*

So perfect even is this union that it becomes a settled condition, and constitutes a marriage. "I will espouse thee in faith, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord," saith God to the faithful soul (Osee ii. 20). It is, in truth, by His Word that God becomes the Spouse of souls. Jesus espouses souls in the name of His Father, and in the uniting virtue of the Holy Spirit; but it is our Lord Who espouses. He is personally the Bridegroom in the Canticle of Canticles. It is He, as Son, for Whom the Father "makes a marriage," to which the Gospel likens the kingdom of God (St. Matt. xxii. 2), and which

* Habitus mentis quo inchoatur vita æterna in nobis, faciens assentire intellectum non apparentibus.—2da 2dæ, Quæst. iv., art. 1.

St. John, in the Apocalypse, calls "the nuptials of the Lamb" (Apoc. xix. 7). Sight consummates the nuptials; but faith commences them, and henceforth the conjugal bond is contracted. Besides—thanks to this sacred tie—the Bridegroom is not only for the Bride, but He dwells in her; He lives in her. And St. Paul tells us expressly that it is "by faith that Christ dwells in our hearts" (Ephes. iii. 17). Wherefore it is that we come forth from God. Faith gives us Jesus, and Jesus, in His turn, gives us what the Father gives Him. "To as many as received Him," says St. John, "He gave them power to be made the sons of God" (St. John i. 12); and St. James says, "Of His own will hath He begotten us by the word of truth" (St. James i. 18). To be one of the Faithful, and to be the son of God, is, then, one and the same thing; and to be the son of God, and a god, is also one and the same thing. "I have said, you are gods, and all of you the sons of the Most High" (Ps. lxxxi. 6)—all you to whom God has deigned to speak His Word. Thus faith deifies us, by making us so many Christs, or, rather, by incorporating us into the one only Christ of God. What is Christ? Humanity possessed by the Word. What is each of the Faithful? If faith in him is a living faith, and especially if it is full and perfect, he is also a man possessed and governed by the Word. O God, "increase our faith" (St. Luke xvii. 5); O God, "I believe, help my unbelief" (St. Mark ix. 24); O God, "grant that, dwelling already in me, your Word may dwell in me abundantly" (Coloss. iii. 16).

Certainly, in the adorable mystery of Nazareth, the Archangel fulfils a sublime ministry. He announces, He proposes, he prepares the descent of the Word of God, and His Incarnation in the womb of the Blessed Virgin.

The sower of the Christian word—the apostle, the pontiff, the doctor, the preacher—is charged with a higher commission, and invested with a still greater power. He is more than an ambassador, more than a precursor—He is a secondary, but most real, agent of a second and most true incarnation of the word of God. United to the Father, co-operator with the Holy Spirit, and participating, in a measure, in the Divine maternity of Mary, He forms the Word in souls; He humanises this Word, He deifies these souls, and it is thus, literally, that He speaks to them in the words which St. Paul addressed to the Corinthians: "For if you have ten thousand instructors, in Christ, you have not many Fathers; for in Christ Jesus, by the Gospel, I have begotten you" (1 Cor. iv. 15). He had begotten them in Christ, and thus he had begotten Christ in them, as he explains in another place, when he says to the Galations, "My little children, of whom I am in labour again, until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. iv. 19).

And understand, that the soul being a simple substance, and faith a single virtue, faith gives to the whole soul those different ways of Divine perception which we have just enumerated. By faith the whole soul becomes an ear, the whole soul becomes an eye, the whole soul becomes a hand, a foot, a hungry mouth. Under these different forms faith remains the only organ of supernatural truth, and the whole soul is the seat of this organ. It is then definitively the whole of man which faith renders capable of the infinite totality of God, and it is thus that it inaugurates between Him and ourselves that perfect, and in itself indissoluble union, of which we have spoken.

"Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved?" (Cant. viii. 5.)

Such is the cry of surprise and congratulation that the Spirit of God causes the Saints to utter in the book of the Canticle of Canticles. There is not, in the life of the Church, a single hour in which this cry is interrupted; and the reason is, that there is not a single hour in which this marvellous spectacle, which caused it, ceases to exist. This creature who thus cometh up from the desert is the soul, which, having faith, acts here below in love, and spiritually makes its ascent towards God. "She cometh up from the desert." When it becomes full of faith, then the earth becomes to it a desert. Its first act of faith has of right made subject to the grace of its Baptism its senses, its own reason, and all its acts. Living henceforth higher than itself, and working in a way far superior to its own nature, it begins to be transformed; and it is thus that it begins to ascend. It disengages itself, little by little, from its elementary life; it escapes from its native ignorance, from its subsequent errors, from the tyranny of the body, of its sensations, of its imaginations, of its dreamings, and also from the captivity, which is often so strict, of its human reasonings. It takes its liberty and expands, experiencing more and more to what extent "the truth makes free" (St. John viii. 32). Its appetites become regular, the passions are reduced to order, because the eye is simple, the heart is innocent, and the entire life is full of light (St. Matt. vi. 22). The world appears to it what it really is: it is seen on every occasion to be as insensible to its seductions, as tranquil under its menaces. It triumphs over all without pride, it traverses all and leaves all without disdain. It rules the outward man from so high a point, that every time God wishes it, and in the measure He demands, it delivers over most willingly this exterior man to watchings, to

labours, to combats, to sufferings. As for itself it dwells beyond, entirely occupied with those heavenly things with which alone it converses. It is thus that faith is victorious, universally and incessantly victorious; and that which makes at first its strength in the struggle, and afterwards becomes the secret of its victory, is the firmness of its confidence and the fulness of its peace. "This," says St. John, "is the victory which overcometh the world—our faith" (1 St. John v. 4).

This soul is therefore happy. "Faith is a treasure of joy as well as of virtue." "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck," said the woman in the Gospel to Jesus Christ; but He said, "Yea, rather, blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it" St. Luke xi. 27)—that is to say, those who have faith truly and fully. To believe in a creature may be so sweet! What is it to believe in the Creator? It is to abandon all one's soul to God in exchange for His Holy Word, and to sleep, while dreaming of the eternal awakening, on the open bosom of absolute Truth? Yes, the Canticle of Canticles says well, that without speaking of the ineffable joys we merit, which we hope for, and which are promised, there is enough in faith wherewith to *inundate* the soul with delights; and its inebriation is sometimes such as to make one ask oneself if indeed there is still such a thing in this world as suffering. Now, all this life—so sublime, purified, set free, dilated, and already blessed, even in this world, with its excellences, its energies its enlargements, its fecundity, its felicities—has its origin and its substance in that entire *support* the soul has, by faith, on the Word, this Jesus Whom it calls, and Whom it has the right to call, its *Beloved*. "God has said it, God has said it to me," is what the soul continually keeps repeating. It lives by

repeating it more than by the air it breathes; and the consciousness it has of being able to say it truly, is the source of all it has, of all that it is, and of all that it does.

I have now given you a very imperfect sketch, but still a sketch, of that grace and of that virtue which we all call faith. It is the principal gift of God. Thus He has willed to put it in the lowest depths of our soul. In the same way that, having resolved on the Incarnation of His Word, He willed to put this design in a place so hidden and inviolable—that is, in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, conceived without sin in our human flesh—that even the sin of the human race should not be able either to ruin or to hinder it. So when He puts this Word into our hearts, He fixes it there so deeply that, unless the soul is disturbed even to its very foundations, it cannot be taken away. Love, which is the natural fruit of faith, is much less sheltered than faith. A single mortal sin destroys love, and if it dies the soul dies. Now this stroke which kills love may not even wound faith. It subsists in dead souls, and can, by the help of God, always raise them again to life: as a stump which, left in the earth after the tree has been cut down, may retain the strength to put forth a new trunk, on the condition of being kindly aided by the sun. The sin of infidelity alone* is capable of destroying faith, and therefore it is a sin so frightfully grave.

But seeing the greatness and the infinite blessings that faith ensures us, you are able to estimate the lamentable state of those who are without faith, and the error, still more deplorable, of so many of the baptised who boast

* Manifestum est quod peccatum infidelitatis est majus omnibus peccatis quæ contingunt in perversitate morum.—S. Th. Summ. 2da 2dæ, Quæst. x. art 3.

of their unbelief. It is to boast, not only of being inexpressibly culpable, but, besides, of having lost one's crown—of being mutilated, of having been decapitated, of being obtuse in the knowledge of heavenly things, of being unfit to receive the Divine communications, of being strangers to eternal life, and placed under the ban of God. It is an act at least as strange as would have been that of Nebuchodonosor if, when suddenly reduced to the state of an animal, he had boasted of having lost his reason. Fools do sometimes such acts; but they are the only people we excuse, and God knows if there is reason to pity them!

It remains for me to tell you how you ought to use this Divine power, to make use of your faith, and to regard everything from henceforth and always in the brightness of that Word which, to use the words of St. Paul, "has commenced, thanks to faith, to shine in your hearts" (2 Cor. iv. 6).

II.

There are three worlds, so to speak, that we ought to consider in the rising glories of that Divine vision, which, in Catholic language, we call faith: the world of persons, the world of things, and the world of events. And, according to this universal plan, of which revelation gives us the secret, each of these worlds has three enclosures, an outer court, where the senses enter on the same level; a sanctuary, to which reason can give us an access; a holy of holies, where faith alone has the power to penetrate.

Not to speak of infidelities, of which the human mind may always render us culpable towards this beneficent light which shines in it, in order to guide, not to constrain, it is easy to see that the differences, often enormous,

which we find in the morals of mankind, arise almost always in principle, from the very unequal degrees of their knowledge in the subject-matter of their judgments, and from the different points of view which decide them to act. The starting point for the conduct is, most commonly, the point of view in which the mind regards it. Thus it is the Word which, officially, has come to change the ways of the world, and it is by means of faith, that He accomplishes this change. In us, as in God, sanctity comes from wisdom, and our wisdom being always the fruit of the union of our soul with the Infinite Reason, which is the Divine Word, hence it is that sanctity resolves itself finally, here below, into faith, by which the Incarnate Word, enters into us, and remains in us. The question then is, when it is anything that affects our moral life, never to stop on the way. We must not allow ourselves to be caught by the charms that are but superficial, nor fall asleep lazily on the threshold. We must cross the region which is above us, more inward and more vast than that of mere secondary causes, and of the realities of mere reason. We must, in a word, arrive at the last sanctuary, which, seemingly obscure, is always a centre, because it is there that God speaks His word, and does radically His works. And as the supreme truth is centred there, it is from thence also that the law sends forth its light, and from thence comes every good movement of Divine grace. Everyone may understand that, as man betrays his nature and offends its Author, when, having received of Him the noble light of reason, he shuts his eyes to it, to follow the impression of his senses; so, the Christian is a traitor to his Baptism, and goes against the Spirit of God, when, possessing by grace the sovereign light of faith, he puts it, or leaves it voluntarily, under a

bushel, in order to regulate his thoughts, his feelings, and his actions. I do not say according to the mere impression of his senses, but according to the judgment of his simple and natural reason. On the contrary, if, penetrating to the very foundation of things, he makes faith the main motive principle of his life, he is that just man, who "lives by faith" (Heb. ii. 4); he is that son of light, who walks in the light; he is the truly spiritual man, of whom St. Paul ventures to say, "that he judges all things, and he himself is judged by no man" (1 Cor. ii. 15). Such a one, in truth, always sees things in the light of God, and this is a point of view, which is neither fallible, nor open to discussion.

We said that we must regard with the eye of faith, first, persons, and among these first of all, without doubt, God Himself, the Author of all other beings, God, the adorable Trinity, Who is, at the same time, an indivisible Unity. It probably appears to you, that you can hardly fail in this duty, to look at God in faith. Bless Him, if it is indeed so, for this duty, most sacred in itself, is a most important and principal one for us. We really fail in this, however, oftener than we think, and it is one of the most striking characteristics of the spirit of the world, that it always fails more or less in this duty, and too commonly, it is a very grave neglect. This happens, whenever we attribute to God our own views, our own sentiments, our own ways of thinking or of acting, contrary to the witness He renders of Himself in the Holy Scripture.

There is nothing in the spiritual life more important than to have true ideas of God, and to have none but what are true. But this is very rare, even among Christians; and the fact is, that considering the weak-

ness of our mind, the impurity of our heart, the lowness of our condition, and the illusions with which the present life surrounds us, this complete intellectual exactitude is very difficult for us to attain. God is a Being so transcendent, so incomprehensible! It is so true, "that He inhabiteth light inaccessible" (1 Tim. vi. 16), and that hence, as the Scripture says, He "exceeds our knowledge" (Job xxxvi. 26). "Peradventure," cried out one of Job's friends, "thou wilt comprehend the steps of God, and wilt find out the Almighty perfectly. He is higher than heaven, and what wilt thou do? He is deeper than hell, and how wilt thou know?" (Job xi. 7). Faith alone remedies this insufficiency, and removes from us the dangers which attend our ignorances. "It is God Himself Who teaches us what thoughts we ought to have of Him," saith St. Hilary, "He is the only master of the science of which He Himself is the object."* Impressing upon us this witness and this doctrine, faith teaches us with certainty and with authority the existence of God; but it is only faith that can give us this certain knowledge; and whoever does not receive from faith, this supreme and constant rule of belief, is almost obliged, and condemned to err. Not that we can be much deceived as to those divine attributes which are called metaphysical; the mind is little exercised thereon; they have no direct influence on our practical life, and the heart has no interest in regarding them differently from what they are. But we easily can go astray as to God's moral attributes, and especially on those which are the two poles of morals among men: sanctity and justice, on the one hand; goodness, love, and mercy, on the other.

* A Deo discendum est quid de Deo intelligendum sit, quia non-nisi auctore se cognoscitur.—De Trinit., lib. v.

Now an error in this matter may have, as to our moral conduct and our salvation, most disastrous consequences.

Make use, then, of faith, to hinder the wanderings of the mind, in danger of being misled by the imagination, by the senses, and by all sorts of passions, of which you are more or less aware. These influences keep or thrust the mind beyond the bounds of what is true; or at least you run a risk in this matter, more than in others, of being thus led astray; employ your faith also and especially, in aiding the feebleness of your reason, in encouraging its efforts, in fertilising its labours, and in giving perfection to its conquests. Certainly, the reason of man can, without quitting its own line and order, furnish us with not only sure but magnificent lights, on God and on His perfections. We cannot, in our own opinion, counsel spiritual persons too earnestly to apply their minds often to these precious gifts of natural theology. They will find in them many living springs of prayer, of elevated knowledge, of noble aspirations, of salutary expansions of the heart, of generous resolutions, and truly of holy works. And if they were not of so much use and profit, they would render great service, were it only by making reparation for so many foolish denials and frightful blasphemies, which the mad rationalism of our time, after having mocked and crucified the God of faith, inflicts daily on the God of reason. But this debt paid, and this gain procured, go further, and, in the full consciousness of the superhuman strength which faith gives your soul, take, so to speak, your intelligence, all radiant with these first glories, and urge it forward with authority even to that living focus, which is their centre, I mean, to the personal affirmations of God as to Himself, to that first, total, infinite, substantial affirmation, which is the

Eternal Word of the Father. Thus you will search what St. Paul calls, "the deep things of God" (1 Cor. ii. 10). It is a conflagration of light, and, as it were, a tempest of truth, though in regard to its essence and its state, it may be simplicity itself, and absolute peace. It matters not, go forward through this storm, and place your foot on this brazier, covering yourself with your faith, as with an impenetrable and inconsumable armour. If your intelligence shudders, think that the mother also trembles and quivers when she brings forth her child. If your reason is bewildered, think that it is simply the beginning of an ecstasy; and if it seems to you that your reason is about to go astray, cry out to it, "that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (St. Matt. xxii. 32), and that, to lose yourself so far, is to finish by saving your soul.

An example will enable you to comprehend what we are now proposing, and also the manner of putting it usefully in practice. The rapid survey of the world, the actual and general remembrance of the history of the human family, or only of your own life, joined to some reflections on the nature and character of God, have, one day, I will suppose, awakened in you the idea of His sanctity and of His justice. Expose this idea to the splendours of revelation. Allow these burning lights to penetrate it. Expose it to those dreadful thunderbolts of the Divine perfections, we mean the punishment of the rebel angels, the consequences through all time of the sin of Adam, hell with its loss, with the fire, with the eternity both of fire and the loss of God, the Passion of Jesus, from the agony in the garden to the last cry He uttered on the cross; then, after contemplating this suffering of reparation and redemption, con-

sider the life of the canonised Saints, the acts of the Martyrs, the entire history of the Church, and the purgatory of the just after death. Not only, you understand me, there will not remain in your mind after this meditation any possible place for the least idea of that silly God, which the world loves to imagine, and which Bossuet somewhere calls an idol; but you will have of God, regarded in this point of view, such thoughts and such sentiments, that, in order to become saints, you have only to live faithfully, wholly, and perseveringly, under their influence.

Meditate in the same way on what you are able naturally to conceive of that goodness, of that love, of that compassionate mercy which is, as it were, the foundation of God's Nature. Carry this elementary fruit of your meditations, into that heavenly region, where shine in their lustre, under the ravishing regard of the Divine complacencies, the Incarnation, the three-and-thirty years of the earthly life of Jesus, the crucifix, the Eucharist, Mary, the Church, the Priesthood, the Sacraments, heaven, with its unspeakable glories, and its inebriating joys without end. Deliver up your soul entirely to those dazzling words, "God has so loved the world as to give for it His only begotten Son" (St. John iii. 16). "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (*Ibid.* xiii. 1). "He has loved me, and delivered Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). You will not only have chased from you for ever that fatal sentiment which is called the dread of God, not only will you have stifled in yourself the germ of all distrust, dried up the source of pusillanimity, reduced to nothing a thousand subtle and formidable temptations, corrected in your soul nearly all the tendencies which

lead to tepidity; but, further, you will have made of your heart a solid, large, and precious throne, on which God will sit with delight, whence life, unction, and joy will flow abundantly; without counting that by the same means, and at the same time, you will have placed yourselves in a condition, the most favourable for attracting, consoling, animating, rejoicing, and sanctifying your brethren.

You may continue thus to exercise yourself, though, perhaps, with more labour, on all the attributes of God. But at least, do not omit to apply your faith very often and very systematically in meditating on that mystery, which, because it is the deepest of all, contains the most perfect and the most efficacious notion of God, I mean, the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. You will understand, without much difficulty, what inestimable lights, what ravishing certainties, we shall derive from this meditation touching the absolute perfection, the sovereign independence, the interior fulness, the essential harmony, the glory, the fecundity, and the beatitude of our amiable and adorable God: that is to say, on all that is, without comparison, the most important, and the sweetest for us to know. Reduce your whole being to your Christian sense, that is, your faith; and apply this faith to the Three Divine Persons, contemplating each Person apart, with His own beauties, and His distinctive excellences, in order the better to contemplate Them in Their admirable relations, and in Their undivided Unity. Draw out, on this matter, all your conceptions one after the other. In proportion as they are more lofty, make of them a fresh stepping-stone for your faith, which, by its own nature, ought always to mount to a still greater height; for there, where your understanding begins to

fail, your faith has a strength still ever fresh, and it alone definitively possesses on earth the virtue to perceive the unknown things of God, and to embrace His incomprehensible essence.*

Communicate often, then, by faith, with the beatific vision of this Jesus Whom faith makes the interior guest of your soul, and with Whom charity makes you have but one and the same life. His Holy Soul had this vision while He was on earth: It has it now in heaven; it has it also in the blessed Sacrament. Communicate with it spiritually by prayer, and sacramentally by the Holy Eucharist. All that Jesus sees of God, and which is hidden from you, affirm it; that is, say Amen to it, as the people, by saying Amen, affirm and appropriate all that the Priest says at the altar, although they may not

* St. Denis the Areopagite appears to point out this practice, when he writes: "Esti tem divinissima Dei notitia quæ per nescientiam accipitur, secundum illam quæ supra intellectum est unionem, quando mens ab omnibus rebus recedens, ac demum semetipsam deserens, desuper refulgentibus radiis unitur quibus in illo inscrutabili sapienliæ profundo collustratur."—De Devin. Nom., cap. vii. 3. St. Leo also says: "Nemo ad cognitionem veritatis magis propinquat quàm qui intelligit, in rebus divinis etiam si multum proficiat, semper sibi superesse quod quærat. Nam qui se ad in quod tendit pervenisse præsumit, non quæsita reperit, sed in inquisitione deficit."—De Nativit. Dni., Serm. ix. Let us quote also St. John of the Cross: "The soul is elevated to God by means of a lively faith, that secret and private staircase, of which all the steps are screened under a mystery impenetrable to the senses, and to the understanding. Therefore the soul renounces their feeble help, to attach itself only to faith which penetrates the deep things of God, hence its disguise. It transforms the principle of its knowledge, hence the safety of its passage, so that it has nothing to fear from the temporal things, from reason, or from the devil."—Ascent of Mount Carmel, lib. ii., ch. r. Explanation of the verse: "I was in surety: thanks to the darkness and to my disguise, I escaped by a secret staircase."

comprehend it, and it may not be in their power to comprehend it. All that you thus affirm, honour, adore, and proclaim its praises, with religious devotion and love. It will be making the best use of your faith, and practising, in an excellent manner, the capital precept of loving God "with all your mind;" it will be a means of nourishing all the powers of your understanding by filling it with the sap of theology, with the aptitude for sacred science, with sanctity and heavenliness of life; and I do not know if anything will better enable you to judge by your own experience, how true are the words of St. John, when he says, "The victory which overcometh the world, is our faith" (1 St. John v. 4).

You will have, further, the advantage by this means of exercising your faith in the Person of Jesus Christ, which is a great duty, and an ineffable joy. Often contemplate God in Jesus—God in that little Infant, while there is nothing, as yet, to indicate His Presence, in the womb of that young Virgin whom Joseph calls his spouse, and whom all Nazareth calls Mary. Contemplate God in that same Infant, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and to Whom she gives suck; contemplate God in that youth, as He advances in years, in grace, and in wisdom, Who, in other respects, lives like the rest of the world, and works to gain His living.

Contemplate God in that Man, Who, prostrate on the ground, weeps, sweats blood, agonises, and asks for grace. Contemplate God in Him, Who was bound, struck in the Face, and publicly scourged; contemplate God in this condemned Criminal, Who is covered with insults, Who is crucified, and dies saturated with opprobrium. See God in His lifeless Body as it is carried to the sepulchre. See Him, and further, all His

Holy Humanity, under the astonishing veils of the Eucharist, His double glory, in this abasement, His all-powerful Word in this abyss of silence, His infinite power in this nothing. We shall never derive from the meditation of the mysteries of Jesus all the life-giving matter which is in them, if, through their human and changeable appearance and outward form, we do not keep the eye of our faith firmly open on the Divinity of our Lord, on this God Who is the principle and the support of His suffering Humanity; otherwise these mysteries will lose their beauty, their savour, and their virtue. If, on the contrary, we contemplate them exteriorly and interiorly, we can better feel than express, how these two aspects lighten up, and, if one may say so, give their value to one another. First, all these states, so truly human of this great and only God, before Whom the entire Universe is but as a grain of sand, those little acts, those infirmities, those real tears, those sighs, that Heart which beats, those Hands which bless, and sometimes caress, those bended Knees—in a word, this life, so humble, so simple, so laborious, so full of crosses, and in all points so like to ours; all this, with God behind, with God within; all this, too, affecting God personally, and entirely taken by Him on His own account, is a spectacle so sublime, so wonderful a harmony, so delicious a banquet, that, had faith, no other effect than to give us the power and the liberty to enjoy them, we should prefer it to everything else, and sell all that we might purchase it.

But besides, seen through this Humanity, which on so many grounds is our own, the Divinity of Jesus is clothed with characteristics so touching, I will say so elating, that while we know very well that nothing can be given to God

which He had not before, and that all which appears to return to Him, comes from Him first, and necessarily as from its source; yet we cannot help finding Him still more beautiful and more excellent, than if we contemplated Him outside of this created framework, which is Jesus. And, indeed, while looking out peacefully through the open window of a house we love, and which is our home, upon a prospect of immense extent, all steeped in azure, and flooded with light, is it rare for us to feel more exquisite pleasure, than if we looked on this prospect in the open country? Oh! I think that, looking on the sea through the window of the house of Ostia, Augustine, and Monica, admired and loved it as they never did when borne upon its waves, the shore and its beauties dropped out of sight.

We should never end if we wished to say all that might be said on this question, so important and so practical on the way of looking at things with the eye of faith. This is particularly true, as to the manner in which we regard the Blessed Virgin. Mary is, to the eye of faith, wonderful in her generation, a divine psalter, an incomparable canticle, a living gospel, an apocalypse, dazzling to the sight; but to the eye of sense and reason, she is a book sealed with seven seals. The Lamb alone has, of Himself, the power of opening it; but as soon as faith places the Lamb in you, you share His power. Open, then, this book, read it, meditate on it, and since God said it first, of a book less beautiful, without doubt, and less holy than Mary is, I may well say after Him, "eat it" (Ezech. iii. 1). The number is great of Saints in Paradise, who have owed, in a most particular manner, their sanctity to the greater intelligence which the ardour and vivacity of their faith have given them, in the mystery of the Virgin mother.

With this same eye of faith look also on all ecclesiastics—on the Pope, who is the necessary and eminent object of faith: on the Bishops, and the whole body of Pastors: on your superiors, on Priests—in a word, on every person, who in any degree has any title of authority, or who has any charge over you. We shall have more than one occasion of speaking to you again of this duty, when I touch upon your different obligations, or of the virtues which correspond with them.* But whoever may be the person with whom you treat, and whatever the nature of the relation you have with him: whether he is your inferior, or superior, or equal: whether a saint, or a sinner, rich in natural good qualities, or full of defects, favourably disposed towards you, or otherwise: whether friend or enemy: whether you have to obey or command him, to instruct or to correct him, to comfort or to support him: begin by not judging according to the appearance, according to the express recommendation of our Lord (St. John vii. 24): do as St. Paul did, and do not judge any one according to "the flesh"—that is, after an earthy and purely human manner (2 Cor. v. 16). Pass beyond not only this first barrier of his physical being, his physiognomy, his attitude, his step, and all his exterior, but also that further and higher barrier of his moral being, the vivacity, the power, and the cultivation of his mind, the sensibility and affectionate disposition of his heart, the amiability of his character; in a word, his nature, such as he has received, developed, reformed, or even deformed it. Enter into the Holy of Holies, into the hidden formations of his soul, the supernatural centre, to the living image of God, to baptismal grace,

* See especially the second part of the first treatise on Fraternal Charity. Vol. iii. of this work.

to that which, if he is not actually at present, he may and will certainly become; to that whereof, if afterwards deprived, he is ready to knock at the door, to enter once more, and to reconquer all. Go there, keep there, and form your judgment there, and set out invariably and exclusively from thence, in order to form your opinion, to speak and to act in his regard. And I would not omit the recommendation, which is highly important, to apply this rule to yourselves—that is to say, look at yourselves principally, with the eyes of faith, and in the light of grace. Nothing is more needful for your good direction in life, as also to preserve in you the harmony of two sentiments, equally indispensable, a consciousness, both in theory and in practice, of your divine dignity, and that profound humility, without which one is not a Christian. You will find in it also the secret of keeping yourselves perfectly chaste and pure, strong against temptations, free from human respect, patient in your miseries—in a word, and of enabling you to persevere unto the end, without which all the rest is useless.

It is exactly the same with things as with persons, and similar duties result from both. Things also have three enclosures, and the last is also a Holy of Holies. Faith alone penetrates into this enclosure, and it ought to do so. There is a supernatural presence of God in bodies. In becoming Incarnate the Word has aimed at deifying all creatures, and He has really deified them in principle: first, souls, then also bodies, so far as they are susceptible of it, and not only those creatures that have a soul, but those which are inanimate, were it only the flower of the field, or the grain of sand on the shore. If God has created the grain of sand, why should not Jesus deify it? To bow down to that which is nothing, to elevate nothing

even to Himself, these are for God two acts of equal value. Then, what is great and little in His Eyes? That a thing should be little in the Eyes of God, there must also be something great. Nothing is great compared with immensity, and nothing is little to love. Besides, what is this dust that our feet tread upon, but the twin-sister of the clay of which God made His Flesh? The glory of the one ensures the glory of the other, or rather includes it. The Humanity of Christ is but the Sacrament of that universal glorification which St. Paul announces when he says, "God will be all in all" (1 Cor. xv. 28). What a Sacrament signifies, it contains; what it contains, it confers. "Like a river, which inundates the whole country," thus saith the Scripture, "the blessing of God hath overflowed" (Eccle. xxxix. 27). "His benediction is His good word," it is His essential Word, and therefore it is Jesus. Sin no doubt opposes a thousand obstacles to this merciful deluge, but the cross has removed them all. If any still remain, it is more in the world of persons than of things. The best beings here become the worst, and there are none who are ungrateful except those to whom a preference has been shown. It is true—and it is one of their greatest acts of ingratitude,—it is true that those who have been distinguished by this preference can, in a measure and for a time, withdraw from God and His Christ these inactive and defenceless creatures. They are guilty of great profanation by making them the instruments of their iniquities. And here is the secret of that unspeakable lamentation that St. Paul heard uttered on all sides: "For we know," he says, "that every creature groaneth, and is in labour" (Rom. viii. 22). Matter suffers violence; it aspires, even it, to the liberty of the children of God; it has a hunger after sanctity;

it has a thirst for peace and glory; it will have it all; it has it eminently in the beatified Humanity of Jesus, but it will have it hereafter in itself.

Though it is now the servant of sin, it is clear that the whole material creation here below continues perfectly innocent; and as nothing can alter its essential goodness, nothing can obscure its splendid predestination. "Every creature of God is good," saith St. Paul, "and nothing to be rejected: it is sanctified by the Word of God" (1 Tim. iv. 4). Now, this sanctification commences in this world. It is for inanimate creatures as for us, so far, at least, as it is possible. Grace reaches them, envelopes, penetrates them; and grace is but glory in its seed. The Blood of Jesus waters our soil by a thousand channels. Some are visible, others are hidden, but all have their action. It is sufficient for this that there are Christians on this earth. Consecrated by God in Jesus Christ, Christians consecrate the world. "This place is holy," says the Church, "in which the Priest prays." Now, this sacerdotal prayer mounts up to heaven everywhere on earth; the more so, so far as prayer is concerned, because every Christian is a Priest. But the Mass, which is said in every place and at every hour; but our holy tabernacles, our consecrated vessels, our churches, all that our Bishops sanctify, all that our Priests bless (and you know they can bless everything), what sources of sanctity, and what first-fruits of glory!

Doubtless all this does not yet appear, for it is in the supernatural order; it is a profound mystery, a mystery for the senses, a mystery for the reason, but a mystery which, to faith, is a region open and full of light. Ah! if we had faith as a grain of mustard-seed; if our Baptismal grace was quite free in its action; if, being ourselves so much honoured, and clothed with such great power

from on high, we did not but too often lose the consciousness and the understanding of it: in a word, if we lived as true believers, as those who are truly spiritual, under the action and in the dependence of that holy Spirit which, St. Paul says, animates all the children of God (Rom. viii. 14); if, I say, we were all this, God alone knows what brightness we should perceive where now are shadows; what harmony where there is now only discord; and what delights we should taste where we have now only bitterness!

Let your minds, then, be penetrated with these truths, and look at all things with faith; but first and principally all things that are holy, and especially so the Holy Scriptures. The Saints loved to read them with bare head, and on bended knees; they kissed the pages of the sacred volume: do as they did. This holy custom is related particularly of St. Edmund, of St. Charles Borromeo, of St. Vincent of Paul. St. Paulinus kept the Bible enclosed in a tabernacle, side by side with that in which he kept the Most Holy Sacrament. At least treat this book with the most profound respect. I say the same of your breviary, and of the books you make use of, for the Divine worship. I say the same of holy places, of the choir where you sing, of the Oratories where you pray; I say the same also of holy relics, of holy images, of bells, and all that is blessed; recommending you in particular to render due honour to your religious habit, which is truly of a sacramental character. Carry the same spirit of faith into all ecclesiastical and religious ceremonies, and be full of reverence for those rules of the Divine etiquette, called rubrics. Once more, pass beyond the letter, go further than the mere outside or form, see always, and everywhere, the Divine, and be

assured that it exists, and that faith will enable you to discover it.

Carry this faith also into all that strikes your senses. All nature refers us to Jesus, all belongs to Him, all expresses Him, all is His work; humanly speaking, everything has rendered Him some service. Has He not borrowed from this marvellous world of bodies, all the figures, all the comparisons, all the parables of His sweet Gospel? Has He not called Himself the light, the fire, the living water, a rock, the way, the vine, a flower, the fruit, corn, bread, wine, clothing, a house, a temple? Happy, and learned, and wise, is that soul who is so faithful, that all that it sees is to it, what it is in the thoughts of God, that is to say, a Sacrament of Christ, and a gate opening into heaven.

Those who contemplate the outward world in an artistic point of view may attain to a high ideal; the forms of Nature are for them lighted up with the reflection of the Divine thoughts. We do wrong to dissuade religious women, at least as a general rule, from thus considering the beauties of Nature; it may be even desirable to give to several of them the positive counsel to cultivate this taste. Nor do I believe that there would be any occasion to put a restraint on those who, having the charge of bringing up children, should endeavour to form their taste for these beauties of Nature. The steps of a ladder may be useful even to those who have wings; and, apart from all personal profit, the exterior worship of God is very directly interested in these questions; so that there might be, if not a duty, at least a suitableness, in considering them. But whatever good you may find in this for yourselves, know that faith leads you to an ideal incomparably higher than that of art; and that, supposing the order of

God, you may at once mount up to it without being in any way bound to any intermediate developments. I mean to say that, being baptised, you may regard the world as the Saints did, without having to consider it first as an artist would do, and without having in you the elementary capacity of so regarding it. I imagine that the soul of Raphael was filled with admirable forms and ideas when he rambled among the sublime prospects around the holy city of Rome. But what was there, do you think, in the soul of St. Francis, when, full of the spirit of Jesus, and panting with the love of God, he smiled on the flowers, on the grass, and on the brooks round about Assissium? You have the eye of St. Francis; endeavour to be as pure, in order to have his way of looking at the beauties of Nature, and you will know by experience something of what David intended to utter when he sang in the Holy Ghost: "O Lord, our Lord, how admirable is Your Name in all the earth!" (Ps. viii. 1).

Finally, this doctrine is true also of events: in their regard it gives rise to the same obligations, and counsels the same conduct. The various and troubled events of this life often appear to us to be matters of chance, often contradictory to one another; but yet these accidents which happen around us are subjected to a rule and obey a law. All that happens in the world is necessarily contained in its general plan; all is adjusted to it, all is but its reproduction. Now this plan you know. Here, as elsewhere, we find a triple enclosure. Like every person, and every thing, so each event has its outer court, its sanctuary, and its holy of holies; or, which comes to the same thing, its body, its soul, and its spirit: its body, the seat of sensation, or its exterior form; its soul, or its rational cause; and lastly, its Divine spirit, which is its

last principle, and, as it were, its supernatural essence. We must, then, here also descend even to the foundation, and faith only enables us to do this. It is faith alone which gives, with the true understanding of facts, true practical wisdom.

In the same way, if we studied and treated the sick in body, without taking any heed of the soul, we should render the science of medicine incomplete, and false as to a necessary part of it, and we should subject the sick man to the mercy of an adventurer; so, to judge of events only after their sensible appearances and effects, or to regard them only in their proximate and secondary causes, would be to condemn ourselves to comprehend nothing of the ways of God, and, consequently, at least in a Christian point of view, it would be to walk in the dark, and to run the risk of a continual stumble or a dangerous fall. Behind the events which happen, and behind also the wills of those that cause these events to happen, there is the knowledge, the wisdom, and the almighty sovereignty of God; there is His infinite love, whence goes forth His great and merciful design of sanctifying and uniting all creatures in Christ; there are all the splendours which radiate from this will, and all the marvellous graces which spring from it. When we leave the source, often so humble, of our rivers, and when we trace their downward course, we always come at last to the sea; it is, in the same way, that, inversely, when we consider in our minds the least accident that happens, and mount up to the causes which produced it, we always come finally to God—to God causing or permitting this event; and thus Jesus Christ declares, that both His Father and Himself are working incessantly (St. John v. 17)—that is, causing or permitting all that happens. Do you understand that

one who is baptised can and ought, in every event, to raise himself up to this higher vision? Do you understand, also, that when once he is in presence of this Divine vision, all changes its aspect for him; that he passes quite another judgment, that he has new sentiments, and that his decisions and his directions are very different from what they were? David, a sinner, penitent, punished, driven away, quitted Jerusalem, which Absolom had attacked. Surrounded by some faithful servants, he fled by the same ways which had seen him so often return victorious over his enemies. Suddenly a man of the family of Saul, Semei, son of Gera, appears at the gates of a city which overlooked the road, and lo! throwing stones at the king and his servants, he comes out, cursing as he comes, and saying, "Come out, come out, thou man of blood, and thou man of Belial, the Lord hath repaid thee for all the blood of the house of Saul, because thou hast usurped the kingdom in his stead, and the Lord hath given the kingdom into the hand of Absolom." One of the officers of the royal army immediately offered to chastise this insolence. Ah! if David had only been sensible to the hurling of those stones; if, also, he had only regarded the wanton offence of the miserable man who insulted him, who was the anointed of the Lord, the true King of Israel, and at such a moment, do you think that he would not have permitted, encouraged, or even ordered, a just vengeance to be taken on Semei? But David, the son of Jesse, was first of all the son of Abraham. Even at the time of his sad errors his faith had never died away; it was remarkably revived by the consciousness of his crimes, by the intensity of his repentance, by the sense of truth, by the energy, and humility, and abandonment of an upright mind, finding itself

actually and deservedly in the Hands of God's justice. Thus passing beyond the bounds of mere human events, and placing himself immediately in the full light of the supernatural, confessing publicly what this light discovers to him, and generously drawing the practical conclusion from it, he says, "What have I to do with you, son of Sarvia; let him alone (for he had counselled vengeance), and let him curse, for the Lord has bid him curse David, and who is he that shall dare say, Why hath He done so?" then, joining to an act of heroic faith, a profound sense of the Divine ways, and a very sublime hope, he adds, "Perhaps the Lord may look upon my affliction, and the Lord may render me good for the cursing of this day" (2 Kings xvi.). Behold a great example and a precious lesson!

It was on the very centre of the eternal counsels of God that Mary constantly fixed her inward eye, in proportion as the course of time developed more and more the human life of her Divine Son. Among so many clouds, amid so much darkness in which she had to follow Him in His course, and especially during His Passion, she carried in her hand, and she bore, ever burning and radiant in her heart, the torch of her faith, and it is this which gave her the strength to remain standing at the foot of the cross on Mount Calvary. Here is the secret of the abandonment to God of which we shall have to speak to you later on, and which, being the perfection of love, is the highest point of the Spiritual Life.

Besides, this look of faith, so penetrating, firm, and habitual, is a virtue too high for a soul to gain without having undergone very great labours. We must pray much, and arm ourselves with great courage, and exercise ourselves without relaxation. The perfections of God

are abysses; His conduct partakes of His Essence, and there are some of His ways that no one on earth is capable of fathoming. Nothing is less rare than to see Him direct everything, as it would seem, in a way the reverse of what we expect, and wish for. One would say that He is pleased to disconcert our mind, to disappoint our heart, to discourage our patience, to scandalise even the good will we have to count on Him for all things, to approve His conduct, and to justify Him with obstinacy in the eyes of whosoever may attack His Providence, or doubt His goodness. He observes an absolute silence, when everything in us cries out that it is high time for Him to speak, and in a way that all may understand Him. He refrains and appears to sleep, when, for years past, we find nothing more urgent than that He should act. He is severe, even to rigour, with those who labour to please Him, and whom we see that in other respects He loves with tenderness; He seems, on the contrary, to overlook everything in those who do not serve Him, and to remain quite insensible to the acts of those who betray and blaspheme Him. Thus it is in the secret life of each of us, and much more so in the government of His dear Church. Doubtless he has many times announced that He will act in this manner, and the Gospel makes it a law for us to expect it. Notwithstanding this, we do not get used to it, and each time that it re-appears, the mystery of the ways of God troubles us.

Faith alone gives us peace, because it alone gives us light. "Watch ye," says St. Paul; "stand fast in faith, do manfully, and be strengthened" (1 Cor. xvi. 13). "The fire tries gold," says St. Peter. "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than that of gold (which is tried by the fire), may be found unto praise,

and glory, and honour, at the appearing of Jesus Christ, Whom, having not seen, you love; in Whom also now, though you see Him not, you believe; and, believing, shall rejoice with joy unspeakable, and glorified. Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Pet. i. 7).

ON THE FEAR OF GOD.

One of the ideas which the work of God in creating the world out of nothing, impresses our minds most irresistibly, is that of dominion and power. If we seek to represent to ourselves the ideal of a firm will, we shall find it in that sovereign determination which has called into action all the Divine attributes for the execution, the arrangement, and the preservation of so prodigious a work. Yet, if we regard this creative will in a practical point of view, and in its immediate relation with the universe which it has produced, it is easy to see, that it is not a primal and radical will in God. God wills doubtless all that He has made; but He wills it for an end, and this end He wills first of all, and more than all the rest. With Him the creation is but a means. The end He has in view, is His greater exterior glory; which is the same thing as to say, the entire accomplishment of His eternal designs on the world, and consequently the perfection, the glorious beatitude, and the consummation in Him, of all the beings He has created.

Nothing can be compared to the energy of the act with which God wills this end. Assuredly this will is by no means necessary; but springing forth from the very Heart of God, we may say that it is impregnated with the necessity of His own Being. It was very

possible that it should not be productive; but from the moment it exists, it becomes a sovereign will. It passes through everything, above everything, and in spite of everything: its movement is irresistible, and its effects are without fail. God Who is everywhere present, no where acts with so much energy, as in His will that His work should be accomplished.

The mystery of Christ comes from this Divine will. At the same time that this mystery is its chief fruit, it is also, so to speak, its first development. This will concentrates itself wholly in Jesus. Jesus is its peace, its success, its triumph. And yet, and here is a fact as astonishing as it is adorable, if we look at the share of grace that God gives us in this mystery of love, if we regard the institution of Christianity with reference to our salvation, Jesus Himself appears to be the means by which it is accomplished: the Head gives itself to serve the body; it redeems, sanctifies, and saves it. The will which God has that we should become His children, is incontestably secondary; it is so by its nature, and of necessity; notwithstanding this fact, it seems that in practice, it overrules Him Who rules over all in the counsels and predilections of the Father. It signifies little that the Divine will is a chrism, which consecrates Jesus to be our High-Priest; it marks Him out as our Victim, it becomes the chain that binds Him, the sword which immolates Him, the fire which consumes Him; and it is after having caused Him to die on a cross, that freed henceforth and joyous, love springs forward, and goes everywhere, crying out to all, and at every moment, and in every tongue, "God wishes that all men should be saved" (1 Tim. ii. 4); "It is the will of God that you should become Saints" (1 Thess. v. 18).

Everyone that comes into the world finds himself then in face of this majestic and loving will. Nothing can precede it; its smile is upon us before that of our mother; it surrounds us more quickly, more totally, and more immediately than the air we breathe, and the child whom it thus welcomes, it fondles and keeps in its embrace, so long as it lives upon the earth (Ps. xxii. 6; Isaias xlvi. 4). Doubtless, this Divine will is clothed for us in a thousand shapes: transformations are a thing familiar to love; nothing renders the heart more pliant, and the mind more ingenious than an obstinate will; and what is so obstinate as love?

Then, the being whom it is sought to gain, is so multiform, so complex, so changeable, often so fanciful! The inventions of an infinite wisdom, the contrivances of an inexhaustible patience—there is nothing that must not be tried, to conquer us! But preferably to every other means, this will of God to save us, presents itself to us under the august form of a law. This arrangement is most worthy of Him, and the most salutary for us. It is this expedient which best declares His own sovereignty, and also expresses most effectually His infinite goodness.

It is, then, a law for all to participate by Jesus Christ, in the Divine beatitude. It is not a simple proposal, nor an invitation, nor a counsel; it is not only a rule of discipline, a relative precept, local, temporary, and capable of being dispensed with: no, it is an absolute commandment, and which lies at the foundation of things. It is a question of life or of death. A created liberty has here the alternative either to live in obedience, or to die in rebellion, but it has no other. Every soul which animates a mortal body, oscillates of necessity between heaven and hell. There is no intermediate way by which

to slip aside, no means of retreat, nor issue, by which he may escape. The end attracts, the end obliges. Let him choose, according to his inclinations, either the good or the bad end, whether happiness or woe; time urges him irresistibly towards it; death will precipitate him into it, and the judgment which follows death, will fix him in it for ever. Besides, it is easy to see, that this terrible sanction of the law is one only of those acts and energies of will which God exerts in order to make us share in His own delights. The law lays hold of us within, and it is what God always commences to do: the penalty binds us without; it is the last resource of God, and, consequently, it is also ours. In fact, the same love simultaneously performs both acts. Hell, considered as the penalty of the law of salvation, is only the work of love, acting the contrary way. Again, this contrary way exists only for us; we cause it, we create it, by our turning back, and we turn back by going against the Divine order. As regards God, all is in the right direction, and continues so eternally.

You see, then, that we are all born, and we all proceed on our way, under the empire of this holy will, and of the law which makes it known. It is this which makes life so serious, and so noble, so sweet, and truly so happy, for everyone who wishes to be truly obedient. It is a great day in our moral life, when we clearly comprehend the necessary identity of this exterior law, which obliges us to become Saints, with that interior law which presses us forward to our true happiness. When man is well convinced that God and happiness are one and the same thing, he has already one foot in Paradise.

Faith does not leave us ignorant, either of this luminous identity, or of this law which governs us all, or of

this end which God marks out for us. It enables, and at the same time compels us to draw the practical consequences of this identity, to submit willingly to this law, to attain this end, and thus to give ample contentment to our merciful and Heavenly Father. One of the graces of the Religious State is that it enables those who live in it to see these truths with greater clearness, and to contemplate them at greater leisure. We may say that the consideration of our last end is the sun of the Religious Life. The faithful Religious abandons himself to the full energy of this holy contemplation. Without always being conscious of it, he always feels its powerful attraction. The emptiness of all surrounding objects forces him, so to speak, to turn to this consideration of his last end, as towards his chief refuge; and he finds all things in it so much the more, as, besides his last end, there is nothing of importance worth his thoughts. It is thus that his very state makes him athirst for God. Can we imagine, in this world, a condition more favourable for salvation?

But when, Religious or not, we are exercised by these thoughts; when we read the Gospel, and hear the secret voice of Jesus interpreting it; when by means of flooding us with light, faith warms the heart, and makes it spring forward with energy, then we immediately experience within us two different and seemingly two opposite impressions. They are not mere vague, or passing, or superficial sentiments, like so many of our thoughts and feelings; the more we reflect upon them, the more lively and strong they become, and the more evident it is how profound they are. Faith does not only justify them, but she is their origin and their root; and in proportion as our faith grows stronger, the greater authority do they acquire. We then see that both of them are perfectly

lawful; that God does not receive them only as incense, but that He claims them as a debt: so that the principal actions which flow from them are duties; and if there is a power capable of maintaining them habitually in the soul, we should not be rash in naming this habit a virtue.

Two words, known and popular, vast in their extent, full of meaning, shedding round them rays of light, interpret these sentiments by which we are so moved, when, opening the eyes of our faith on the long career of our life, we see that God Himself is the end of it, that He calls us as our Master, and holds out His arms to us as our Father. One of these words is fear, the other is hope. If there is much to say on what these words signify in the holy language of Christianity, it will not take long to explain the words themselves. To comprehend them, and to have commenced to live here on earth, is one and the same thing. Fear straitens and binds us, or, at least, lays hold of us, and prevents our advance. Hope dilates, excites, and makes us spring forward with a bound. Grace keeps care of this foundation, which nature establishes in us. It always supposes it, but it strangely transforms it; it inserts in it a principle more holy; it makes a sap to circulate in it which is more active, and consequently it draws from it effects which are quite new. In the order of grace, fear and hope continue, it is true, quite different in their nature, but yet they are not at all contrary the one to the other. Far from it; they mutually imply one another; one fills up the other, and they bring each other mutually to perfection. The Holy Scripture always joins them together, and it would be impossible to say which of them it commends the most. The truth is, that they are both in-

dispensable. United, as they ought to be, they are the practical reply of the soul to the revelation God has made it of its future destinies; they inaugurate what may be called the setting out on the journey towards the last end. This, then, is the proper place to speak to you on this subject. The soul, in the state of grace and justice, is often compared to a bird, and particularly to the dove. Faith is the eye, the look of this noble bird; charity is its life, and the principle of that flight which it takes in soaring to its heavenly nest; but still it is necessary that the bird should unfold its wings, and move them with regularity: now its wings are precisely fear and hope.

Is there, then, an order between these two virtues? Yes, without doubt; but it changes according to the point of view we take to discover it. In the order of their heavenly genealogy, hope goes before fear, as the law goes before its penalty; as the love of God for us (love, of which the presentiment, if not the assurance, is at the bottom of everyone who hopes)—as the love of God, I say, goes eternally before the law, and remains its inward essence. God seeks, first of all, to produce hope: it was with hope that He inspired the Angels in their yet untried life, and also our first parent, when He placed him in the earthly paradise. In fact, since the Fall, it is no longer always thus, and fear often gains an advance upon hope. The Holy Spirit Himself calls fear "the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. cx. 10); and the old law, in which it holds so conspicuous a place as to give to it its special character—the old law of fear precedes, announces, and is a preparation for the new law of hope. In the New Testament, on the contrary, as grace and love superabound, so hope begins again greatly to prevail

over fear. But still it often happens, in the course of the Christian life, that fear first of all snatches the soul from evil, and leads it back to God. Besides, hope is a theological virtue, which fear is not: on this title, also, we should say that the one is superior to the other.* But, on the other hand, fear is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, which makes it superior to all the moral virtues, and makes it rank very high in the hierarchy of grace.

Finally, if we look at it in its perfect state, and if we judge it after the actions which it originates, it appears to be only another form of the virtue of charity, and as such it much surpasses that of hope. Therefore, while hope, like faith, is obliged to stop at the threshold of the heavenly Jerusalem, fear enters of right with love, and there receives, with love, the perfection of its beauty, the fulness of its liberty, and its eternal stability. It is what David teaches us in the Psalm, when he says, "The fear of the Lord is holy, enduring for ever and ever" (Ps. xviii. 13).

We will speak, first, of fear.

There are three kinds of fear of God; all three are just, good, and sanctifying, and all three proceed from the Spirit of God; but they have not all the same moral beauty, nor the same moral excellence. The first is the fear of the chastisement God inflicts on the sinner; the second is the fear of sin, which offends God; the third is the enlightened, profound, and practical sentiment of God's infinite majesty, and of the unspeakable reverence to which it obliges us. The first continues to diminish as the second increases. The progress of the second follows most exactly that of love, and as St. John

* Cfr. S. Thom. Summ. 1da 2dæ, Quæst. lxviii., art. i. 6 et 8.

teaches (1 St. John iv. 18), where love is perfect, it ends by completely destroying the first kind of fear: not, indeed, in its essence, and in its principle, at least here on earth, but certainly in its exercise. As regards the third kind of fear, it not only grows, like the second, with charity, but in a sense, which we have just expressed, it is this charity itself, inasmuch as it sees and feels that its object surpasses the second kind of fear in every way, and infinitely so. Therefore, we have added, that this fear remains in Paradise, and it is only there that it is perfect.

We have now to explain to you, successively, these three kinds of fear.

I.

First of all, observe, that there is an unworthy fear. It is not, in any way, the fear of God: it is the fear which, without any reference to God, the creature has of his own suffering. I do not speak here of an instinctive fear; when it is a question of morals, we consider only actions that are free. I speak of a fear that is seen, voluntary, dominant, and which principally determines both our dispositions and our actions. In the state that this fear supposes, the soul positively loves what God commands it should not love; it is enamoured of disorder; it desires with passion what it knows to be a real sin. This action, which is the formal contradiction of the thoughts, the love, and the will of God, this action, which, in regard to the perfections of God, we may call hell, it regards as a paradise... But it has a dread of God. If it has no longer the thought of His sanctity, it has of His justice, and still more of His almighty sovereignty. It dreads the falling of a thunderbolt; between its false paradise

and itself, it thinks there may be one of the Cherubim armed against it; in a word, hell appears, more or less vaguely, behind the different phantoms which beset it. Thus, seized with fear, and terrified, it stops, and restrains itself. But this terror, which chills the will, does not warm the heart, nor does it extinguish the love of what God detests. He who is possessed by this unworthy fear regrets profoundly that evil is evil, and especially that God punishes it. Supposing God absent, blind, forgetful, careless, and especially powerless to chastise, he would not hesitate to commit sin. There is clearly the love of sin in him who is influenced by this fear; and, consequently, therefore, to his own ruin, the love of God is dead in his soul. The monster fear does not go forth, it is true, from the breast which has conceived it; but it continues there, and, while hiding it, it nourishes it still.

It is better, doubtless, to have even this fear than to have none at all; it is an ignoble restraint, but still it is a restraint; it is morality in ruins; but there still remains in it some traces of moral rectitude. We must not say, then, that this fear is wholly bad; but it leaves the soul in an evil state, in a state, indeed, so evil, that if the soul is not cured of it, it must of necessity be lost. Moreover, if the soul is only restrained by this fear, it does not generally remain in a mere negative state towards God. The absence of love in it implies almost always a certain degree of hatred, if not of God Himself, at least of His will, and of the laws which imposes it upon us. It is one of the most fearful effects of sin, that we can scarcely commit it without feeling angry with God for forbidding it. God appears to the sinner almost inevitably a sort of mar-joy, One who is envious of our pleasures, jealous of

our liberty, exacting, and tyrannical. To form such a judgment of God, to have at least this thought about Him, is it not to have already begun to hate Him? The least evil that can follow such a disposition is, that it makes one interiorly full of bitterness; and what a disposition is this for a creature? Oh! how hell is already in the commission of sin! Doubtless it is the ear in the germ; but how easy it is, then, to perceive it, and to state absolutely that hell is only sin ripened, and come to its maturity! (St. James i. 15.)

Fear is also cowardly, or rather it is more than cowardly, when, instead of fearing the evil which comes from God, it fears only that which comes from man. I mean that evil which the eye can see, of which the lips can speak, and which they can relate and publish; the evil that comes from a hand that can punish. Alas! how many are there who would sin if they only had God for a witness, and who abstain from it because man is there, or because he might suddenly appear on the scene? Poor human heart, prodigal son of God! what a lamentable and shameful history you commence on the day when, without bidding adieu, you cross the threshold of your Father's house!

In short, this fear is only fitting for slaves; on this ground it is not Christian. Fear becomes Christian when, desiring to possess God, Whom by this very desire we begin to love, we are afraid to lose Him, or at least to incur His displeasure; and this causes us to abstain from whatever might either compromise our salvation, or draw down upon us the Divine vengeance. In this matter we are not disinterested; we doubtless think more of God than of ourselves: it is at least our sincere opinion that it is more fitting to think of Him than of ourselves; but still

we also think of ourselves. We have a very lively fear of any evil that may happen to ourselves; not only the evil of hell, but all sorts of evils, which the merciful justice of God is wont to inflict on us during this life. It is no longer the fear of a slave, but it is not yet the fear of a child. It is the fear of a servant—a servant incomparably more loved than loving, a servant who loves nevertheless.

We cannot, assuredly, pretend that this fear of God is heroic. But still less can we maintain that it is not good, and a means of sanctification. God recommends it, and even praises it, in many places in the Holy Scriptures. The Holy Spirit Himself inspires it; and so excellent is it, that He alone can inspire it. It is ordinarily the first success of this sweet Spirit in the human soul when it endeavours to detach it from evil. The Holy Council of Trent makes it one of the steps by which the sinner ascends towards God.* And when the soul is restored to grace it is careful not to dismiss this friend, who is a little austere, perhaps, but who is faithful and precious. It has too much urged it to penetrate into this sanctuary of peace where it resides, not to have still some secret which aids it to preserve it there.

Many do not raise themselves while on earth beyond this fear. Many mount higher, but only by starts, in moments of special grace. By habit, without being insensible to the idea of the offence given to God, such persons continue very sensible to their own sufferings. It is rather fear that keeps them from offending God, than it

* Disponuntur ad justitiam, dum excitati divinâ gratiâ et adjuti, fidem ex auditu concipientes, liberè moventur in Deum. . . . et dum peccatores se esse intelligentes, a divinæ justitiæ timore, quo utiliter concutiuntur, ad considerandam Dei misericordiam se convertendo, in spemeriguntur.—Sess. vi. De Justificat., cap. vi.

is love which urges them to serve Him. In many respects it is sad to remain in this state; and we cannot help exhorting Christians, and especially Religious, to aim energetically at regions still higher. Besides, this tendency is certainly a part of the essential obligations of the Religious Life. Notwithstanding to whatever height you may have ascended, do not ever despise this elementary fear. God is contented with it. I do not say to you, be contented with it yourselves; but, do not forget that, in the matter of the forgiveness of sins, God is contented with it. You have already seen that this fear supposes not only faith, but love. However thick, and, I will say, however damp, may be the wood which this love makes use of to feed its fire, when once this love burns, it is a true fire; and thenceforth it will rejoin its sphere, its natural element; it will return to that God Who is called "a consuming fire" (Heb. xii. 29); and more or less slowly, more or less gloriously, this love will save the soul.

The doctrine of the Church on attrition is, without dispute, one of the most eloquent pages of Catholic theology, because it is a revelation, inexpressibly touching, of the infinite goodness of God, and the compassionating indulgence of the Heart of our Lord. Is it not a ravishing marvel, and an eternal subject of gratitude and of jubilation, that God, Who loves us so much, and Who died for us, regards Himself as paid by so moderate a return? It is not, certainly, a *human* heart that releases from a debt so easily.

Do not treat with disdain this fear in your neighbour. A soul that you see actually a prey to it may mount to a love incomparably higher than you have mounted. St. Teresa relates in her Life that when she became a Religious, it was at first from the fear of being damned, in case

she did not answer to the interior call of God.* Do not any longer slight this fear in yourselves. Do not abandon the cultivation of it, either lightly or too quickly. It is good to be no longer a novice in the science of Divine love, and in the practice of the cross, that you may enjoy the liberty of passing by always, or at least habitually, the consideration of hell, of purgatory, and of the sad consequences of sin. I do not say that this rule is absolute; it is certainly a general one. And those who walk in different ways, and who have reason for doing so, will act with holy prudence in resorting, from time to time, to this method of meditation. But, besides, and without going so far in the meditation of the effects of God's justice, it is often very salutary to reflect seriously on the temporal and secondary consequences of sin, its common results, its possible effects: such, for example, as the suddenness of certain maladies, if not of death; the violence of certain physical pains; the intensity and the duration of certain infirmities; the horror of certain humiliations; the depression caused by certain cares; in a word, those scourges of all kinds which are in the Hands of God, and with which, according to the testimony of Holy Scripture, He often scourges His children who are the most dear to Him (Heb. xii. 6), sometimes to prove them, oftener to punish them, but always for their sanctification. Oh! we are so made that a sharp attack of toothache has sometimes more power to keep us from falling down a precipice than even the thought of the presence of God, or the sight of our crucifix.

If, in your spiritual strategy, you keep this fear in the rear as a reserve, well and good. Do not let it engage, unless the body of the army has begun to yield; but when

* Her Life, written by herself, chap. iii.

there is need, have recourse to it with speed; and, in order to be able on occasion to make use of this reserve with certainty of success, take care of it and nourish it. You need not be at great expense for this nourishment. Let this fear have enough to keep it alive: it is sufficient, but let it live. At all costs, save God in yourself—His honour, His liberty, His peace, His life, which are also your honour, your liberty, your peace, and your life. Ah! what is the humiliation of being reduced to defend yourself by such ignoble means, compared with the odious humiliation of one single defeat, that is, of the least sin? Fight valiantly. You know the warlike energy that we are sure to have when our altars and hearths are in danger. It is the common opinion of mankind that we ought, at the cost of our blood, to defend property so holy and so indispensable. But there is in this struggle more and better things to guard; for the altar which is attacked is your soul, and the hearth on which the enemy would fain extinguish the fire, is your share of the Holy Spirit.

It is often and truly said that extremes meet. It happens, then, that those who are very pure, and love God very much, and therefore are very holy, feel this elementary fear of the chastisements of God very sensibly. Doubtless, by reason of their great love of God, this fear in them has some particular characteristics that we search for in vain in those who are less advanced in perfection. It seems to be the effect of a strong impulsion of Divine power, and on this ground it is a real, often a great, grace. We have received, for example, an interior light on the perfections of God, especially on His sanctity and His all-amiable, although very terrifying, justice. Thence comes a strong emotion of fear. We know otherwise very well that this justice which affrights us is only one of the names,

one of the beauties, one of the virtues, of the love which charms us. Further, when God works thus in us, it is because we already love Him greatly; and it is this very love which, by inciting the Divine action, renders us capable of supporting it. Love brings with it light, and the effect of this light, joined with love, is, that however great this fear may be of which we are speaking (and it may even be excessive), it leaves the soul, in its lowest depths, mild, humble, docile, abandoned, peaceable, almost joyous. Nevertheless, there remains a bitter pain; and, as the Divine chastisements are the special motives of this fear, it belongs to that kind of fear of which we shall treat presently.

How shall we be able to speak of the state of that soul of which this fear has taken possession? However, we must attempt to describe it, for the instruction and consolation of those who pass through it. The soul, then, before God, is somewhat like the Israelites at the foot of Mount Sinai, when, from the Mount enveloped with dark clouds, there issued continued flashes of lightning, and there was heard the roar of thunder. God appears to it especially as a Judge, having also this other characteristic, that He is the absolute Master of all things, and that there is nothing in the whole universe which He cannot make use of to execute His sentence. Further, the soul is under the influence of that strong and saddened feeling which moved St. Paul when he said: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the Hands of the living God" (Heb. x. 31). The more so because, being a prey to these terrors, the soul sees more than ever in itself many dark spots, where it has a thousand reasons for suspecting that there are hidden germs of evil which irritate God, and vindicate His justice in punishing it. It is not ordinarily conscious of any

fault; but it has learned from the Apostle that this absence of remorse still leaves, up to a certain point, its innocence doubtful (1 Cor. iv. 4); and even the silence of the conscience is often a cause of anguish, for it sees in that very silence a proof of its blindness, and a manifest sign of its complete disgrace. In fine, the soul suffers, and sometimes in a way not to be expressed.

What, then, ought it to do? What can it do? Submit, abase itself, keep silence before God, adore Him, abandon itself to Him, allow itself to be consumed as incense on the burning coals of the thurible; then pray from the depths of its humiliation, hope against hope, assert its love, in spite of all that love which it receives from God—that same love which it shows Him, and it does show it Him, when it has the sincere will to do so. Let it, then, strive to smile at Him Who makes it tremble; and if it cannot altogether smile, at least let it keep itself voluntarily at His feet, even under His feet. Let it there keep itself in humility, in patience, and in confidence. It is its resource, it is its duty; and if it is faithful to it, it will be to its profit, and greatly to its profit; for there is not perhaps a crucible from which the soul comes forth more pure, with a greater hatred of sin, more crucified to what is evil, more free to serve God, and more fervent in His service.

Many pass through this fire; some remain in it a longer or a shorter time; with many, the trial is reserved for their dying moments. We see in the lives of the Fathers of the desert numerous and moving examples of this; and it seems, in fact, that then, at the hour of death, it is most natural to have this fear. It is then, perhaps, that it is most formidable; in any case, be assured, it is then the soul is especially favoured with the Divine help.

Besides—and the thought will give you light and a supreme consolation—we cannot doubt that our Lord, in passing through the different states of our humanity, Himself experienced this fear of the chastisements due to sin—chastisements that He Himself was to feel, as being laden with the sins of us all. This fear entered as a part—subordinate, indeed, and limited, but real—into the prelude of His agony, which the Holy Spirit describes in these words, which contain a fathomless depth of meaning: "Then Jesus began to fear, and to be heavy, and to be sad" (St. Mark xiv. 33). This fear in Him did not regard the eternal evil of sin, although, if I am not mistaken, Jesus, in the excess of His charity, went as near to the very confines of that evil which it was not possible for Him, it is true, to suffer, but which was possible for all whom He was to love, whom He was to redeem, whom He was to make His members, and of whom so great a number would suffer this evil as their eternal destiny. Yes, I believe that Jesus condescended to experience in His Soul and in His Body all the woes of damnation compatible with His sanctity; so that even in His extreme fear of those evils which were to be the effect of His Divine and infinite justice, we may contemplate Him as having suffered them, and thus, with the greater confidence, lean upon His Sacred Heart. Whatever were the nature and extent of His fear, you understand there was nothing in it of infirmity, timidity, or weakness. As the Holy Spirit, in the beginning of the world, moved over the vast expanse of waters, so the strength of Jesus, His unalterable patience, His invincible obedience, His triumphant love, brooded over the immense undulations and the unspeakable tempests of His Soul. But also, being Man like ourselves, and bearing

the image of sinners; holding their place, and becoming their surety; being for them Priest and Victim, rigorously paying our debts, meriting for us all grace, and giving us an example of all virtues, He did not spare Himself our fears. He truly trembled, and His Heart became as ours would have become, heavily oppressed; and It grew chill and weak when He saw and felt the torrents of the Divine vengeance fall upon Him. All this is written of Him prophetically in many places in the Psalms, and with a clearness, a vigour, and a detail which, leaving no room to doubt their application, move the Christian soul to its lowest depths.

II.

Besides this fear, which is good, there is a fear which is better. The great evil of sin, is not the penalty it deserves. This penalty is in reality nothing but the active and omnipotent affirmation of the rights of God. It is a reprisal of His justice, an act of His sovereignty, an irradiation of His sanctity. It is His inevitable triumph over evil, and the most glorious effect of the fixed character of His being. This penalty is order, as opposed to disorder. There is in this penalty due to sin so great a necessity, such a beauty, and so much goodness in the moral order, that those who are divinely enlightened are enamoured with it. From the moment they feel themselves culpable, they are most eager for punishment; and they yield themselves with ardour to a justice which they provoke, by calling it down upon themselves. It has been said of suffering, that it is a glory and a great ornament to a sinner. This is true. Without suffering, the sinner would be incomparably more out of order than he is, and therefore a greater deformity. We cannot conceive a sinner always

sinning and always without punishment. He would be worse than a monster: he would be a living triumph over God Himself. It is, then, Divinely arranged, that with the damned their damnation is the penalty of their sins. And if God was not in that penalty, in the only manner in which it is possible, would not the joy of heaven be troubled by the fact, eternally evident, of the damnation of a great number of His creatures? In short, if in Hell God was not to be found, there would be no hell.

The great evil of sin is not, then, the punishment of the sinner, it is the offence against God. These two words contain the most incomprehensible, and the most astounding, of mysteries. No conflict of enemies engaged in a mortal struggle hand to hand, no juxtaposition of objects incompatible with one another, no proposition formed of contradictory terms, no imaginable discord, represents the shock, which is the effect of the horrible collision of an act which constitutes sin, with that Being, infinitely adorable, Whom we call God. To offend God! But how? But wherefore? That this can happen, and especially that this does happen, is manifestly a mystery. If the least sin could enter Paradise, it would instantaneously cause a revolution of which no catastrophe on this earth could give us any idea. The sudden annihilation of all creatures, comprising the Blessed Virgin, and also the Humanity of Christ, would be, *in itself*, a less evil than the slightest offence given to God. Set out, then, from this principle, if you would estimate the burden that our sweet Redeemer has carried. This principle the Church teaches; and although the human mind is overwhelmed by it, reason itself, attentively listened to, imposes the duty of believing it. We said that the Catholic doctrine on attrition is a marvellous revelation

of the indulgent goodness of God; the theology of venial sin is an equivalent declaration of His ineffable sanctity.

David challenged all creatures to reply, when he asked, "Who can understand sins?" (Ps. xviii. 3.) In effect, the knowledge of the offence supposes that of the person offended. The knowledge of the offender, which has also its importance, far surpasses all our thoughts. Who among us is able to fathom the nothingness of man? But the knowledge of Him Who is offended! But God! Who has seen Him? Who knows Him? Who has taken his measure—the measure of His dignity, the measure of His authority, the measure of His excellence?

Notwithstanding this, what God alone knows wholly, what the Blessed know according to the extent of their glory, the matutinal glory, which is faith, begins to discover to us; and the fear which certain souls have of sin, shows them how far God has revealed to them its frightful deformity. I do not know if, after the love of God, there is anything which we ought to desire with greater ardour than the light from which this fear springs; for it is the fruit of the light, and it supposes the knowledge of doctrine, as a branch of a tree supposes the existence of the trunk. "Come my children," said God by the Psalmist, "I will teach you the fear of the Lord" (Ps. xxxiii. 12). "In truth," writes St. Hilary, "this fear is the subject of a Divine instruction, and it is necessary to learn it. It does not consist in a terror which we suffer, but in a doctrine which we accept; and what leads us to it is not the emotion of a sensitive nature, but obedience to the laws, the works of an innocent life, and the knowledge of virtue."* In fact, this fear has its principle in that

* Discendus Dei timor est, quia docetur. Non enim in terrore est, sed in ratione doctrinæ. Neque ex trepidatione naturæ, sed

splendour on the Holy Face of God, which the Scripture shows us as "signed upon us" (Ps. iv. 7). Viewing it in its origin, it is a real communication to our soul of the idea God has of what is evil, of the judgment He forms of it, of the treatment He inflicts on it; in a word, of what we may call the attitude of God in respect of sin. "God fears nothing," says St. Thomas. He does not fear sin more than any other thing; but He hates sin. He holds it in horror and abomination. Now this Divine hatred, passing into us, continues there, a true hatred; but it becomes in us also a fear, because sin, which cannot touch God, can always stain and defile ourselves.

Because it is thus founded on a likeness of mind and heart with God, the Scripture everywhere commends this fear as an act of wisdom. If it is still in its infancy, or, at least, if it is in the soul in the beginning of its work; if it labours principally to break off bad attachments, and to lay the foundation of its conversion, the Holy Spirit calls it "the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. i. 7). If it goes on increasing, if it purifies and sanctifies the life, the Scripture then describes it as "the lesson of wisdom" (Prov. xvi. 33). If, having finished its task, it has reached its perfection, it declares this fear to be the "fulness of wisdom" (Eccles. i. 20).

It is this which also makes this fear so entirely filial. That light in which the soul unites itself to God, in order to apprehend it; that wisdom which is its root, and its sap, in its first and essential reality, is the Word, the First-born of God, the Eternal and Only-begotten of the

præceptorum observantiâ et operibus vitæ innocentis, et cognitione veritatis ineundus est. . . Nobis timor Dei omnis in amore est; metum ejus dilectio perfecta consummat.—S. Hil. in Ps. cxxvii. 2.

Father. Now, to be united to this Word in the order of grace, is to become His Son; it is to receive from Him what is His; it is to share His heritage. So the more we have in us of that Spirit Who makes us turn towards God, exclaiming, "Abba, Father" (Rom. viii. 15), the more we shall fear to sin. This fear is also the mark of the children of God on the earth. "It was created," says the Wise Man, "with the faithful in the womb; it walketh with chosen women, and is known with the just and faithful" (Eccles. i. 16). This fear is also of use as a sign of recognition; it is the characteristic mark of the children of God by which they may be known upon earth. The world is but the assembly of those who do not fear offending God. In the eyes of the world, in truth, sin is nothing, or next to nothing; and I ask myself if the open impiety of those with whom sin is of no account gives to God a greater outrage than the inexpressible levity of those to whom it is of such little moment, that they speak of it with a smile, and make a sport of committing it.

In regard to yourselves as Religious, you ought to be the active and energetic contradiction of the world. Esteem, then, very highly, and guard with care, this precious treasure, the fear of offending God. The Holy Scripture tells us that this fear is "the whole of man" (Eccles. xii. 13). It is certainly the essence of a Religious; and whatever may be your other treasures, it is essential that this holy fear should be the pledge of their conservation. If Jesus, your Judge, does not see it in you, though you had, in His sight, the most rare dispositions, and many virtues, real or apparent, you would only have to expect from Him that terrible sentence, "Because thou sayest I am rich and made wealthy, and have need

of nothing, thou knowest not, that thou art wretched, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Apocal. iii. 17). With this holy fear, on the contrary, I do not know what it is you want; and of it, as of wisdom, we have a right to say, "All good things come to me, together with her" (Wisd. vii. 11).

I cannot certainly enumerate all these good things; but I will mention at least the principal; and may God grant that such rich fruits may give you the desire of cultivating the tree!

Fear is the parent source of that delicacy of conscience which is, as it were, the divine sensibility of the soul; and without which, not only there can be no sanctity, but all the piety and virtue we may seem to have is but a delusion. It produces that spirit of vigilance which is so constantly and so strongly recommended in the Holy Gospel. It is like a lofty tower, from the top of which the soul looks round on an immense horizon. It not only keeps us interiorly watchful, but, ruling and regulating the affections of the heart, it aids that purity which renders our sight clear and our view penetrating. The soul, which is filled with a holy fear, sees at once, and from a great distance, the faintest clouds which rise out of the sea, and the least particles of dust the wind raises in the plain. It foresees what threatens, it foretells dangers, it baffles craft, and anticipates surprises. It is prudent, discreet, reserved. We might think that it is timid, and even pusillanimous; it is nothing of the sort. If our fear is what it ought to be, well-ordered, and free from alloy; if, besides, it is surrounded by other virtues which give it perfection, I mean simplicity, confidence, and what I may term the practical sentiment of the honourable and paternal character of God—far from casting us

into perplexity, into minute details, and into scruples, it corrects, by little and little, the natural tendency we have to fall into them. We have said that its source is the light; it is consequently itself a light. Now the death-bed of scruples is confidence in God; but light is their sepulchre.

This divine fear is the elder sister of humility. It stifles in its germ the spirit of presumption, which drives so great a number of souls into untrodden paths, where they run many risks, and encounter a multitude of perils. It gives us the love of common ways; it does more than dispose us to take its warrant in everything; it obliges us to it. There is no risk that he whom this fear accompanies would steal away from the muster-roll. It disposes the soul irresistibly to interior and even exterior mortification. The Psalmist cries to God, "Pierce Thou my flesh with Thy fear" (Ps. cxviii. 120). That is, make of Thy fear a nail to penetrate my flesh. Blessed nail, precious nail, saving nail, which has wounded all the Saints, and of which every son of Adam has need to feel the point! It makes those blessed thorns to grow in the gardens of the Bridegroom, which protect the lilies, and help them to grow, by keeping far away from them whatever may hinder their progress (Cant. ii. 2). This fear is, in regard to God in the soul, what St. John the Baptist was to Jesus Christ; it prepares His ways, and makes straight His paths (St. Luke iii. 5). If fear is the first of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, it is so, doubtless, because it opens the road to all the rest. It is the gate through which they pass, and the title of their liberty.

Oh, how excellent and how prolific is this grace of holy fear! It animates us to acquire every virtue, smoothing for us all our difficulties, and consequently rendering

their practice more easy. It helps us most particularly in practising the virtue of hope. "In the fear of the Lord is the confidence of strength" (Prov. xiv. 26), says the Wise Man. It is the active principle of zeal: "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, he shall delight exceedingly in His commandments" (Ps. cxi. 5). Such a man, in truth, takes care not to neglect anything (Eccles. vii. 9). He brings to all that he does that attention, that exactitude, that seriousness, that fervour, which give to his works their beauty, and assures their success in the sight of Heaven. Fear, besides, has this in common with love, that it is admissible everywhere, and perhaps, viewing the state of man on this earth, its absence would be more missed from our human life, than even that of love itself. We may do a good work from another motive than that of charity; there is no act and no occasion in which we cannot displease God in some point, and in which we have not, therefore, this displeasure to fear.

Another of the great blessings of this fear is the liberty it procures for the spirit. The salutary captivity in which it holds the outward man, renders the inward more free to act and move at will. As a king moves about in his palace with great freedom, when he knows that its gates and the avenues to it are watched by tried and faithful troops; so the soul which fears sin, walks everywhere, here below, without alarm. To have no fear of God is to be the slave of a thousand fears which are vain, childish, or craven. "The fear of God is not before their eyes," says David, "there have they trembled for fear where no fear was" (Ps. xiii. 35). On the contrary, he who fears nothing, but to offend God, continues full of courage and in peace. It is of faith that he is "happy" (Ps. cxl. 1;

Eccles. xxv. 13). It is in a manner impossible that he should not have also the spirit of joy. The greater part of the sadness experienced by persons of piety comes from the feeling, more or less real and well-grounded, that they have grieved the Holy Spirit. It is by destroying the roots of our infidelities, and our immortifications, that fear necessarily cuts off these sad flowers of trouble.

In truth, as there is not on earth so perfect a fear as to banish all sin from the soul and from our human life, so there is none which yields a perfect joy. What then? Fear has marvellous secret ways of plunging those that have sinned into great interior pains, of pricking them with a thousand darts, of rending their heart with sorrow, and of making them shed floods of tears. But fear never makes use of this power, except as a last expedient, unwillingly, and, as it were, to take holy revenge for the refusal to listen to its first advice. There is, therefore, no need to wait till these tears are dried up, to cry, "O how great is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for them that fear Thee" (Ps. xxx. 20).

The truth is, that the Scripture, which calls this fear at first a glory, a joy, and a crown of exultation (Eccles. i. 11, 12), concludes by entitling it, "a paradise of benediction" (*Ibid.* xl. 26). And, in fact, fear, while fixing the spiritual man in a sort of earthly paradise, becomes at the same time his sufficient and his certain ground for entering for ever into the paradise of the Blessed. God Himself seems to have pledged His word for it, by declaring that "with him that feareth the Lord, it shall go well in the latter end, and in the day of his death he shall be blessed" (Eccles. i. 13).

But we must obtain this fear; we must preserve and render it perfect. For this end certain conditions are requisite, and there are several means to employ. "For if thou shalt call for wisdom," saith Solomon, "and incline thy heart to prudence; if thou shalt seek her as money, and dig for her as a treasure, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and shalt find the knowledge of God" (Prov. ii. 3). You understand the Wise Man speaks at first of invocation. He means prayer, and the price of the blessing asked for, makes us easily suppose that prayer for this holy fear ought to be impetratory and persevering. Then he speaks of humble dispositions, of interior docility, of a good and sincere will, which is a kind of promise to correspond with grace as soon as it is received. Finally, he speaks of a seeking, of a labour, of an effort; but a seeking which is full of desire, of a labour which is courageous, of an effort which is persevering. There is no excess in the recommendations he makes, nor exaggeration in the figures he employs. It is sufficiently clear, then, that this fear is the well-earned salary of a great labour. Now what is this labour?

There is so great a harmony in the spiritual Life, that we cannot cultivate one virtue without making others also grow in proportion; and every virtuous act tends to produce a simultaneous progress in our whole moral being. All that we do that is good and holy contributes, then, to increase in us the fear of sin. But the most direct and efficacious means to obtain this increase of holy fear, is, after prayer and the Sacraments, the meditation on sin itself, both mortal and venial; the deep knowledge of its nature, of its malice, of its characters, at once hideous and odious; and, lastly, its terrible consequences both in this world and in the next. It is, above

all, the intelligent, affectionate, and continual contemplation of the Passion of our Lord Jesus. Here is the great school of this holy fear, because here is the supreme revelation of sin. We see in the Passion of our Lord, and much more clearly even than in the torments of hell, what sin dares, and what it is able to do, and in what a degree God detests it, and in what manner He punishes it. Oh! who would give us to understand, in some degree, what was the interior vision which the Blessed Virgin had of sin during the agony of Jesus in the Garden of Olives, and in the unheard-of torments which followed? Nothing can be compared to those sentiments of terror and horror with which sin then inspired that Immaculate creature, except it was the nameless and boundless compassion with which her heart, more than crucified, was filled for sinners, and first, and most of all, for those impious wretches who blasphemed and crucified her Divine Son. The conclusion we ought to draw from this truth is, that we ought often to implore the Blessed Virgin, that, imparting to us a share in her Divine lights, she would deign to make us partakers with her in those sentiments of love and fear which cannot be expressed in words. Thus the Holy Spirit, when He tells us that she is the Mother of beautiful love, immediately adds, that she is also "the Mother of holy fear (Eccles. xxiv. 24); and I think that if, in certain respects, these are two different fruits, our Mother Mary, by one act of her maternity, begets them both at once in our souls.

III.

We have appropriated to the fear of sin the numerous and magnificent praises which the sacred writers have

given to the fear of God. It was our right to do so, and we have not ceased to walk in the truth. Yet we must admit that, if we wish to see these praises fully justified, we must needs ascend still higher than the fear of the evil done to God, and raise ourselves up to that fear which God Himself inspires. God, the object of so much love, is also an object of fear; and love loses nothing by it.

In vain God loves us, and honours us with a thousand acts of tenderness; in vain He humbles Himself to proportion Himself to our littleness. He is God; Jesus on the cross is God; Jesus in the cradle is God; Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist is God. In all the states in which He is placed, under all the forms He borrows, He is the infinite abyss of Being, the only One Who fills all, Who contains all, Who bears all, the Immense, the Almighty, the Incomprehensible. His simplicity confounds us, His glory blinds us, His sovereignty crushes us. We cannot, without being terrified, contemplate His justice; and whosoever undertakes to consider His sanctity, is constrained to veil his face. To fear Him is absolutely the same thing as to know Him; to be moved before Him, even to trembling, is simply to be sure that He is there. How can we approach Him, except on our knees? To have but a glimpse of Him gives us an immense hunger, to be swallowed up, to disappear, and to lose ourselves wholly in Him. And to fear Him thus is to honour Him, it is to pay Him a debt. Besides, we are forced to this, if truly we approach Him. There is a trembling that is inspired by terror. The demons are condemned to it (St. James ii. 19). There is a trembling that comes from the evidence of majesty, the excess of reverence, the solemnity of worship, and from the inebriation even of love. The powers that excel in strength, and the thrones

so firmly seated, feel this trembling in the midst of the glory of Heaven.* This kind of fear, I have already told you, continues even in heaven, where there is neither sin, nor risk of sin, neither chastisement nor pain. It is independent of all that passes with time; it is the thrill of the creature, in presence of the Creator. Here, on earth, this fear is necessarily imperfect; but even in this state of inevitable imperfection, it is a sign of our nobility, a sublime token of our destiny, a precious germ of our beatitude. It is a perfection of the soul, and tends to make the whole life perfect.

It cannot be admitted that a life, seriously Christian, should be entirely without it. But it is clear that it is especially indispensable in a life which is devoted in all its acts to the worship of God; and such is the life of Religious. Religion is their state; their actions are vowed to God, as is also their person, Now fear, so to speak, consecrates these actions. It makes them acceptable to God, by penetrating them all with the sentiment of his greatness; it offers them up to Him, and gives them the power to reach even His Divine Presence. Our Lord, reminding His Disciples of the Jewish ritual, says in His gospel, that "Every victim shall be salted," and He adds, "The salt is the fire" (St. Mark ix. 48). Everything a Religious does should be like the Religious himself, a victim offered to God in Communion. Now the fire which salts the victim is a love which fears, and the salt which burns, it is the fear which loves. God asks of His people the most elementary religious sentiment, when He says to them, "Reverence my sanctuary" (Levit. xxvi. 2). He says elsewhere: "If I am a Master, where is My fear" (Malac. i. 6). We dishonour God,

* Preface of the Mass.

then, if, even while throwing ourselves into His Arms, as into those of a mother, we forget that He is a Master Whose Feet we are wholly unworthy to look upon. Now the higher, the more elevated in perfection the state is in which we live, the more this religious fear ought to abound and flourish in the soul. We are compelled to admit that there is not enough of love in religious communities; perhaps it is that holy fear is still more wanting therein than love; and who knows whether it is precisely because of their want of fear that their love remains often so imperfect?

There are some remarks on this subject which are of a very delicate nature to mention. Certainly, I think that no one can be more inclined than I am to counsel ways that are expansive and simple, and which inspire great confidence in God. I should be indeed distressed to narrow and confine, were it ever so little, those hearts, which ought to unfold their blossoms with so much the more of beauty and fragrance in the service of God, as it is better understood, and more perfectly rendered. But we cannot refrain from saying, that among the sentiments which inspire a soul with a tender and ardent love for Jesus Christ, if that of a profound reverence for God be wanting; if a holy and religious respect lies not at the bottom of this tenderness; if, in a word, fear is not one of the central fires whence these ardours are enkindled, that soul should have a distrust of its love; and it would be only prudent in such a case seriously to examine its ways. Take, then, a scrupulous care that your intimacy, I will even say, if you like, your familiarity, with God, does not degenerate into a love without respect and without ceremony.

A certain familiarity with God is assuredly most natural

to a Christian. A Religious has particular and superior titles to it; the Bride has a right to greater familiarity with the Bridegroom than a child has with its father. In reality, nothing is more honourable to God, in our intercourse with Him, than this simple and child-like manner. Nothing is more according to His own Heart, nothing agrees better with His character, nothing answers more perfectly to His grace, to the advances He makes, to His behaviour in our regard, to the names which He gives us—in a word, to that spirit of piety which is the very foundation of Christianity. One of the principal objects of the Incarnation was, to reveal the possibility of this sublime familiarity between the creature and the Creator, to lay down its doctrine, to bring the grace of its accomplishment, to institute its form, and to invite to its realisation the entire human family. The Eucharist teaches us to what an extent God intends that we carry this holy familiarity. We are not, then, sufficiently pious, nor have we sufficiently understood the Gospel, nor profited by the Sacraments, so long as we are not holily and simply familiar with God.

But if this familiarity, well understood, is a state so desirable, when wrongly understood and badly practised, it is nothing more than an irreverent freedom with God: and this irreverent freedom with God is something horrible. Even among men of unequal rank and condition, it is so unbecoming as to be unsupportable. But between the creature and God, in what terms shall we describe it? He who allows himself to give way to this freedom, will flatter himself in vain with the idea of his perfection. Whatever may be his exterior conduct, whatever virtues he may otherwise practise, the sole fact of treating God with this irreverent freedom proves that he is, in a

large measure, ignorant, dissipated, unmortified, and unmannerly.

Beware, then, of this defect, and, first, in your conversation. Do not pronounce, for example, with levity, heedlessly, and even without sufficient reason, that adorable Name of God, which Holy Scripture calls "terrible" (Ps. cx. 9). If, when your lips articulate it, you do not incline your head, which it is very commendable to do, at least excite in your heart some sentiments of respect, of religion, of love; and do not let this thrice holy Name ever proceed from your lips without being surrounded by a halo of piety. Think a little of the glory, of the sanctity, and of the joy with which, from all eternity, God has uttered it in Himself; for, as you know already, for God to pronounce this Name, is to beget His Son. Do not speak of God simply for the sake of speaking, and especially in the way of a joke (Eccles. xxiii. 10). It is commonly said, with much reason, that we must treat holy things holily. How, then, ought we to treat the Holy of Holies? Avoid, then, all want of proper ceremony and respect in your official relations with your Sovereign Master and Lord. Alas! how often it happens that we fall insensibly into this irreverence, in our prayers, in saying the Psalter, in the reception of the Divine Sacraments, in the ceremonies, and in the different functions of the Divine worship, in the manner in which in which we enter the church or the choir, in our behaviour when there, and when we leave it. It is to act without respect in our conduct, when we act in matters of importance, without imploring the help of God, and without consulting Him: when we take liberties that are indiscreet, when we run risks, by walking in hazardous ways, by making our own

case a privileged exception, and by expecting without any sufficient reason, if not miracles, at least greater graces than are ordinarily given. The spirit of fear is evidently a sure remedy to all these evils, the least of which is exceedingly grave.

One of the chief reasons which hinders the success of our prayers is the habitual or even the actual want of this precious spirit of fear. A reverence full of faith, an interior homage paid to the Divine Sovereignty, seems to us to be an essential part of that preparation, without which, the Scripture declares, that he who prays "tempts God" (Eccles. xviii. 23). Remember, that in the Holy Sacrifice, which is the most perfect model of prayer, the part which is the most solemn, the most efficacious, and in all respects the most Divine, opens by that sublime invocation, which, both in heaven and on earth, is the inspired expression, and, as it were, the official formula, of the religious respect of which we are speaking, "Holy! holy! holy! is the Lord God of Hosts!" And how often does prayer, commenced in fear, terminate in an expansion and joy of heart. The natural movement of this fear is to enlarge and fill the heart with tenderness. Besides, if God has put into our souls that general and profound need of inclining, with hearty kindness, towards those who humble themselves before us, is not this a sign that it is also His own manner of acting? Conclude, then, that, in order to receive His choicest favours, the best way is to confess that He owes us none, and that His Nature even hinders Him from ever owing us any, though it still impels Him to bestow them upon us.

Let this fear, then, be the prelude of all your works; by thinking rapidly of some of the perfections of the Infinite Being before Whom you are about to perform

them, and for Whom you ought to perform them. An entire and constant fidelity to this single practice would make you Saints in a short time. This is one of the secrets of those giants of sanctity, the ancient Patriarchs. The Scripture seems to sum up their life, their works, and their virtues, when it says of each of them, "He walked in the presence of God" (Gen. v. 22; vi. 9; xvii. 1; xxiv. 40), that is to say, always regarding that Supreme Majesty which always sees and regards us.

There is nothing so effectual as this fear to keep the whole soul in order. The Holy Spirit says, "God is in heaven, and thou art on earth, therefore let thy words be few" (Eccles. v. 1). It is a consequence far too profound not to be sufficiently obvious, but it is strikingly exact and true. Never, in fact, will anyone, who is thoroughly penetrated with the thought of the Presence of God, exceed in words. He feels, too, strongly, when he thinks who God is, how foolhardy must be the creature, whoever he may be, who dares to speak in presence of the Creator. Such a one is, consequently, voluntarily silent; and what a saving is there here, in the account to be given of sins! what a benefit also for the Religious Life! what a gain for the common edification! This same sentiment of the Divine Majesty rules, in a wonderful way, in other respects, every attitude both of soul and body: that which is within, and that which is without. It renders the soul sweetly serious, in all things modest, and constantly mistress of itself. It withdraws it from the outer world, and helps it to be recollected; it disengages and simplifies it; it fills it with unction, it bathes it in grace, it embalms it with God, it surrounds it with that ineffable atmosphere which is in all places where God deigns to dwell.

The soul which is animated by this fear is on this very account, and necessarily, one of those "true adorers" (St. John iv. 23) whom the Father seeks always, but especially in monasteries, because He has a special right, and therefore a more solid hope, of finding them there. We all know that adoration is the highest point of religion, the last fruit of piety, the supreme act of worship. Assuredly love enters into this act; it flows into it abundantly; it spreads itself abroad in it; its triumph is there. But when even this love enters the soul, at first all alone, which is seldom the case, it does not remain long without fear; and the exact moment when it becomes adoration is precisely that in which a ray, darting from the Holy Face of God, has come to touch the soul, whose love vented itself in prayer; and making it tremble, even to its very centre, compels it to annihilate itself before that God it had invoked.

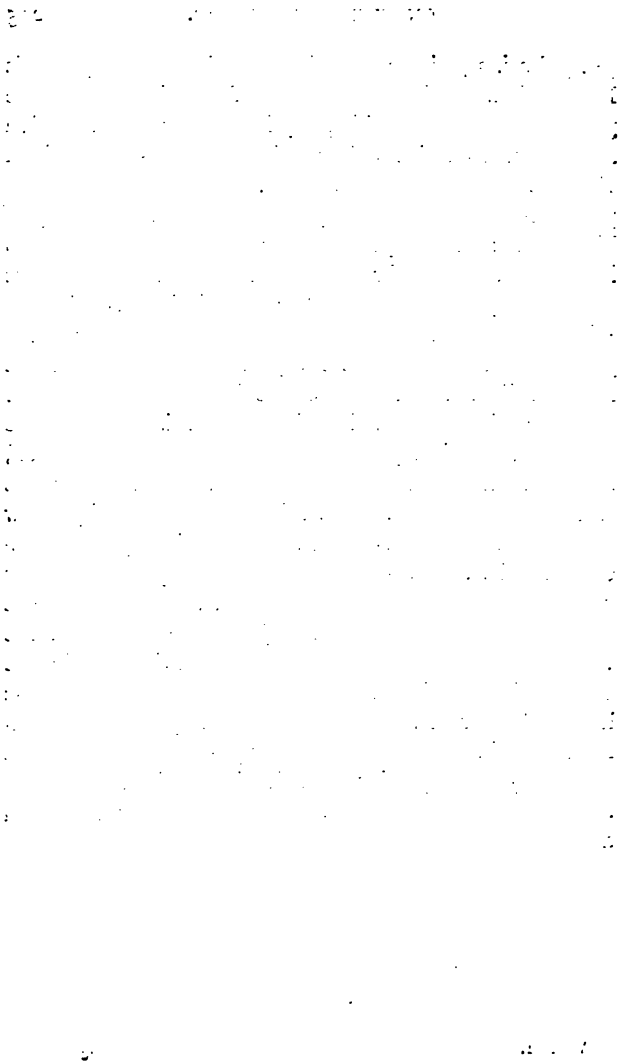
Prompt to adore, because it is habitually full of the sentiment of the Divinity, the soul which has received in this degree the gift of fear, lives above all vicissitudes. It feels, indeed, as others feel, the adversities of life, but preserves its peace, whatever happens. It is scandalised at nothing; never does it murmur. It knows in advance the depth of the ways of God; it knows that God is an abyss of the unknown, and that incomprehensibility is His Essence. It finds it, then, very easy to understand that His designs and His proceedings should borrow something from these Divine perfections. It is quite familiar to it to see God's thoughts disappointed, His designs over-ruled, His modes of action unsuccessful; but what goes far beyond its human intelligence, does not go beyond its faith, nor does it lessen its hope; it does not weary its patience, nor is it too great a trial for its charity.

Jesus, the Only Son of God, Who is of one mind and heart with His Father, Who is so equal to His Father that He is one with Him (St. John x. 30)—Jesus lived here on earth in the habit of this holy fear. This fear was one of the beauties, one of the virtues, one of the principal graces of His deified Soul. No one ever kept Himself so profoundly humbled as Jesus before the all-holy Majesty of His Father; no one was silent as He was; no one adored as He did. This unbounded reverence, and this sublime state of interior annihilation were, in Jesus Christ, the first-fruits, and, as it were, the natural splendour, of the hypostatic union. In truth, illuminated as He was by the light of this Divine union, the Soul of Jesus saw, with an unspeakable evidence, the all-sufficiency of God, the nothingness of the creature, and how entirely voluntary was the free gift of that love which united in Himself this all with this nothing.

Demand of our Lord the grace of an abundant participation in this state of His most holy Soul. Beseech Him to initiate you in these glorious perfections of the Divinity, the fulness of which was in Him, but of which His Humanity deigns to be for us, as He Himself instructs us, the organ, the Sacrament, and "the door" (St. John x. 9).

You will have also, besides, to exercise towards this holy Humanity the duty of holy reverence. You must not neglect this practice. You will not have towards the holy Humanity of Jesus the becoming measure of piety, if you do not render to it this Divine worship of fear. But if you never pay this duty of reverential fear, and especially if you have a sort of repugnance thereto, it will be a proof how little you have advanced in the science of Christ. His glory, "of the Only-begotten Son of God"

(St. John i. 14), is an essential part of the mystery of His Incarnation. Veiled to the eyes of men in the days He passed here on earth, this glory is now perfectly unfolded in heaven, where it floods with its brightness the purified vision of the elect. Also when St. John, exiled to Patmos, perceived with his mortal eyes the glorified Humanity of his Master; he who yet had seen Jesus so closely and so intimately; he who had been one of the three witnesses to His glory on Mount Tabor; the virgin Disciple, the Disciple loved and preferred to the rest; who was judged worthy to receive Mary as his heritage; he the Prophet likened to the eagle—he it was who fell to the ground as if struck by lightning (Apoc. i. 17). I have no need to remind you that simply by showing Himself, and without doubt much farther off, and with far less splendour than to St. John, this Divine Humanity threw to the ground and blinded St. Paul on his way to Damascus (Acts ix.). We shall see Him one day appear in His glory, when, surrounded by Angels, and borne on the clouds, He shall come again to judge the living and the dead. In the meantime, we now see His glory in the obscure light of faith; let us contemplate it, nevertheless; let us allow ourselves to be penetrated by the rays which issue from it. Our tenderness for Jesus will thus become more holy, and by this means it will acquire the right of becoming still more ardent, and of expressing itself with a greater simplicity.



ON CHRISTIAN HOPE.

HOPE is the soul of human life. It seems that, were the sun never to shine in our atmosphere, existence in this world would become impossible. However, we could live more easily without the sun than without hope. Hope is the deepest, the most absolute, the most constant, the most universal, of all our wants. Where hope springs up, there all is life; where it continues, everything prospers; where hope languishes, all gives way; where it dies, all becomes frozen and still as death. It is the spur to all our enterprises, the stay in all our labours, the secret of our patience, and that aroma without which even our joys turn into vexation and disappointment. If hope did not smile at our birth, we should curse the coming of the new-born babe into the world; and if its sweet ray did not gild our sepulchral stone, death, except in the case of those who had lived without inspiring any love (it is almost saying, save monsters)—death, I say, would be a thing most lonely. We would always hope; we need hope everywhere; we love even its very shadow; and rather than not have it at all, we accept even that which is but an illusion. A sad resource, assuredly, is a vain hope! less sad, however, than complete despair. For if it is a question of the root of our hopes, I mean of that invincible instinct which makes us

believe in prosperity and expect happiness, this illusion never, absolutely speaking, deceives us, nor is it wholly false. This instinct is right in itself; it answers to a law; it is the echo in us of a Divine Will; and if man, in whatever state he might be in other respects, followed it legitimately to the end (all things being providentially disposed as they are now), he would ascend even to the blessed summit where God has placed our last end. The fact is, that hope belongs to the essence of our earthly state; and the place from which it is for ever banished is not earth, but hell. It was impossible that hope should not hold a very considerable place in Christianity, and there play an important part. The natural order contains no power that Christianity does not recognise, does not accept, does not consecrate, and does not employ. What likelihood is there that it would neglect this power, which is the mainspring of all the rest? But Christianity has done for it what it has done for all things else; in appropriating it, it has divinely transformed it; it has increased the value of its object, enlarged its horizon, strengthened its foundations, increased its capacity. Everywhere it has put God into it. The very substance of God, that is to say, His life, His glory, His essential beatitudes, has become, through Jesus Christ, the regular daily bread to satisfy this hunger for happiness, which we feel so strongly. Thus constituting Himself as the proper object of our hopes, God has made Himself, besides, its guarantee. Placing Himself before us as our perfect felicity, where all our desires will at last find their entire satisfaction, He has then willed that we should make Him our support and stay, so that we may derive directly from Him both the boldness to aim at destinies so sublime, and the courage, notwithstanding

the length and the difficulties of the way, to follow them, and the strength to attain them.

Then, a most providential and happy fact for us, God has made it *a law* to hope. This irresistible need of our heart He has raised to the height of becoming an obligation of conscience! It might have appeared sufficient that God should have permitted us to hope in Him; and what grace would have been contained in that permission! No moral merit, no human heroism, no angelic virtue, would purchase the favour of being able to hope, without folly, for any share whatever in the Divine life. When the personal enjoyment of God was offered to man, not only the desire ought to have excited in us the most ardent longings, but hope should have sprung up naturally from this offer which had been made us. However, God did not depend on that natural desire, and He has notified to us on this matter a formal precept. The purport of this precept is not found, it is true, in that authentic summary of the Law we call the Decalogue; and it is the same with the precept of hope as with that of faith: of neither does the Decalogue state any express obligation.* But what the Decalogue does not mention, God makes known to us in many places of the Scripture; the Church has always taught it; and, as we ought to believe in, and to love, God, so we ought also to hope in Him; and this under pain of losing Him, which is the same thing as to lose all and to lose oneself.

* St. Thomas (2da 2dæ, Quæst. xxii. art. 1) gives this reason why the ten great precepts suppose necessarily faith and hope, which are "the preamble" and the base of the rest. The Law, in fact, is not strictly received as such, except by those who believe in the Legislator; and it would not have been sufficiently kept by man if it had been deprived of its sanction.

This absolute form with which God thus clothed His Divine Will no doubt redounds to the glory of His Sovereign Majesty; but in His eyes this would have been but a slight advantage. He consulted in it His goodness more than His dignity; and, in an enterprise on which all our happiness depended, He has had nothing more at heart than to take every precaution against our weakness. No; however full and entire the permission might have been, had it been transformed into a prayer it would not have been really sufficient; and how can we doubt this, when so often, alas, even a law is not enough?

To say the truth, the Law is always insufficient, if it remains isolated. It has not in itself, says St. Paul, the strength to bring anything, whatever it may be, to perfection: "For the Law brought nothing to perfection" (Heb. vii. 19). He means especially the Jewish Law; but we may and ought to understand it of all laws, and especially of all positive laws. We spoke just now of the immense need we have of hope, and, consequently, of our natural inclination and tendency to hope. This is incontestable; but there is another fact not less so, which is, that in man as he is, there are many tendencies to distrust. God had, then, to rectify these tendencies, and to hinder us from yielding to them. It is probable that He would have effected this without difficulty, if the happiness He proposed to us had been chiefly natural and sensible; but when He has assigned us for our attainment a felicity that is spiritual, transcendent, heavenly, and, what is more, that is future, it was only by triumphing over us, that he could succeed in us. It was necessary that God should modify our nature, that He should turn it towards its end, and adjust it to His law; it was needful that He should create in it superior aptitudes and tastes—in a

word, a grace was needed to accompany and vivify the precept, and bring it to perfection.

Now this grace is come: God has given it to man by intimating to him the Law; and for us, at least, who belong to the law of the Gospel, He has put it in the law itself. It is this grace which, flowing into us in the sweet and holy mystery of our justification, becomes thereby precisely the virtue of hope. Thus this supernatural hope, which God ordains us to have in Him, He creates in our souls. What a beautiful, beneficent, and precious creation! What an expansion of the faith! What a root and what sap for love! What a magnificent and solid bond to unite us to God! What security for a life exposed to so many dangers as our own! What a work already done towards our salvation! What a pledge of our final victory! What confidence does it give us of Paradise!

I told you, in the beginning of this treatise, that natural hope is the soul of our human life. That hope, which is born with us in Baptism, is, then, the soul of the Christian life; for the first of these two lives is the prophetic foreshadowing of the second. All Christian acts here below suppose Christian hope. Its measure in our souls is that of the activity of grace in us, and, therefore, of our divine fecundity. There is not a sin which does not imply a want of hope; not an error, not a halt, not a look we cast behind us. Oh, what a virtue! rather, what a world of virtues! what a treasure of duties! what a source of merits! But how rare is this virtue! How rare, at least, are those in whom this hope is firm, and fully matured! To look at it in theory, it appears simple as well as sublime: we should say that everything ought to flow towards it; but in practice it is difficult;

and we cannot exercise ourselves in this virtue of hope so as to content God, we cannot especially excel in this Divine virtue without immense labour.

The Religious State is, without dispute, one of the richest and most extensive fields which God has opened out for the cultivation of this noble virtue. To embrace this holy state is already to give proof of a great hope. But it manifests a much stronger hope when the Religious fixes himself in the state by vow; and one of the principal beauties, one of the chief attestations of the moral virtue of the vows, is the heroic hope which they suppose in those who take them. But if so vigorous a hope is wanted to lay the foundation, how lively and fervent must it be in order to raise and to finish the building! As God, then, has honoured you with so high a vocation, and has given you, by this favour, an evident sign of His predilection, you become to the spirits of darkness so much the more an object of their furious jealousy; and hence it is a kind of necessity, that as the benedictions of heaven fall like a shower incessantly upon you, so temptation, also, should roar around you like a tempest. Now, your firmness in resisting temptation, and your vigour in working out your salvation, depend, above all, on your hope.

It is, then, necessary to treat of this virtue, which, in union with the fear of God, ought to sustain and regulate the inward movement of your life, towards the perfection of your state, and, consequently, towards your last end. There is, perhaps, no other subject of which we should wish to speak to you with greater exactitude, and in a more worthy and efficient manner. The question here is, in fact, to communicate to you great supernatural strength, and to light up in you the sacred fire. Doubt-

less this fire is practically and really the fire of love; but love, here on earth, lives only by aspiration, by inquiry, by effort, by conquest; and hope is the secret of this conquering activity: it is why I have called it a fire. In reality, we have to reveal to you the Heart of God; for it is in the centre of this Heart that Christian hope has its roots. But who are we, O my God—who are we to make known your Sacred Heart; we who feel ourselves unworthy even to lift up our eyes to catch a glimpse of the softened extremity of those rays, which, coming from this thrice-Holy Centre, descend so mercifully on our darkness? And yet we must so clearly reveal this adorable Heart, we must make known so clearly its measureless goodness, its unchangeable fidelity, its inexpressible tenderness—in a word, its numberless and limitless perfections—that, after you have read this treatise, it would be next to impossible not to count on Him for all things, and in every circumstance that may occur. But the greater this grace is, the more firmly we should expect it; for when is it more fitting to hope than when we undertake to make this hope known, loved, and practised? We shall try to show the true supports of Christian hope; after which, summing up the qualities which this virtue should have in us, we shall by that means set forth and explain the numerous, varied, and perfect duties that it implies, or that it produces, and that divinely peaceable and happy state in which it places and maintains the children of God on this earth.

I.

First of all, then, it is of prime importance to state precisely the question, and to determine exactly the object of Christian hope. The object of Christian hope

is, first and above all, that real, full, positive, and, consequently, eternal, participation of the essential life of God which in the holy Catholic language, we call indifferently beatitude, glory, heaven, salvation, or our last end. In the second place, all the means which are necessary and useful to arrive at this Divine felicity are the object of hope: means different from one another, and countless; some of which belong exclusively to the supernatural order, and others, without belonging, have some relation to it, by the benediction which God gives them, and the direction that He impresses on them. These are the objects which the Divine law commands us to hope for, and which form in us the virtue of hope; and it is in God personally—you understand what I mean—that we ought to hope both for the end at which all terminates, and those means which conduct us to it.

This principle, then, being laid down, we say that there are three Divine grounds of Christian hope: the Nature of God, His Word, and His pledges. His Nature (which we must especially regard in this matter), inspiring and regulating His exterior conduct in our regard, and constituting what we may term His moral character; His Word, which in this case is invested with the form of a promise; His pledges, which are, as it were, the first-fruits of all the happiness He has promised us.

We are creatures; which is the same thing as to say, that we have with God relations which are essential, immediate, and incessant. Our whole being depends upon Him, and has reference to Him; and it is the same with our powers as with our essence, and with our acts as with our powers. To live, to live especially as a moral being, is to have to do with God. If we regard salvation, the life of every individual is an enterprise

which commences, as the morning-dawn, here on earth. God and the soul are both engaged in it. Regarding only its own interest, the soul is more engaged in it than God; but looking first at the love with which God begins our salvation, and then at the glory with which He crowns it, God is more engaged in it than the soul. But strictly, God does nothing in this matter all alone; and if the soul is wanting in her duty to God, of which her freedom of will, added to her feebleness, renders her always capable, then the whole undertaking inevitably fails, and utterly miscarries. The final glory of God, doubtless, will not be frustrated by it; but as to the base and unfaithful soul, it will for ever be deprived of the share it might have had in this glory.

Notwithstanding, it is evident, that in this enterprise of the salvation of His creatures, God remains the supreme and principal Agent; and if there is no irreverence in applying to Him qualifications which are so common among ourselves, we may say that He, is in this matter, at once the contriver, founder, partner, principal, and fellow-labourer. He Himself traces out the whole plan of the enterprise; He Himself fixes its conditions. He furnishes the materials for it; He regulates all its proceedings; He exercises over it the supreme superintendence; He has more than half the labour; He alone can ensure its success; there is no one but Himself who can estimate its value; and He reserves to Himself exclusively the payment of the salary. You have only to reflect, and you will see that, in this capital affair of our salvation, such is the true situation as to God and ourselves.

Now, what we have to consider at first in every enterprise undertaken by two parties; what we have need to know, whether in the commencement or in the con-

tinuance of the work, what ensures to this work zeal, patience, and confidence—are the resources which he can command with whom we associate ourselves; and it is also, and especially, his moral character. Will this individual with whom I engage myself, or am already engaged, be able to do what he wishes? Will he wish that which he is able to do? And if his will and his powers are good for one day, will they continue so always? Is he rich, skilful, faithful? In short, can one completely confide in him?

All these questions naturally arise between us and our Creator, from the moment when, in concert with us, He declares Himself our Saviour. If the reply to these questions is perfectly satisfactory, it is clear that we may, that we ought to, hope; and if this reply is more than satisfactory; if, containing absolute affirmations, it brings to us besides infinite securities, our hope ought manifestly to rise to its height. What, then, is the fact?

I have said that the Nature of God is the first support of Christian hope. In man, nature is one thing, character is another, and resources another. But what is separated and divided in man is perfectly united and one in God. God is in His conduct what He is in His Essence; and what He has, what He can do, is still what He is; for in Him all is existence, and this existence is Himself. So that, in order to know what interests us in this matter, we have only to consider what God is by His Nature.

We should be wanting in discretion, or indulgence towards reason, if we questioned it categorically on the degree of confidence inspired in mankind by the God it proposes to them, when, in order to explain God to them, it relies on its own lights. We know what

beautiful and touching things may be written on the subject of the Divinity within the range of natural philosophy. We may go very far in this matter, especially in the case in which, setting aside positive revelation, either by a supposition assuredly permissible, or by a real exclusion, which cannot be made without sin, we remain forcibly impregnated with supernatural light. It is the case of all moderns; for even with the apostate of the present day, the light of Baptism still sheds around him the light of many Christian truths; and within our social circle, from whose influence no one can completely withdraw himself, there are, thanks be to God, a great number of these heavenly irradiations. However, wide as may be our concessions in theory, what is practically, in the matter of hope, the efficacy on souls of the God of pure reason? We should fall into excess if we were to say that it has no efficacy whatever; we shall be rather beyond or below the truth in asserting that it is but small. And, in fact, taking the world as it is, with those profound depths which the supernatural has created, especially with those currents, so gloomy, so sad, and so dreadful, which, as the consequence of sin, traverse it in all directions—considering, I say, all these circumstances, reason finds itself in the face of problems which it is unable to solve. And when, making use of facts which are obvious, constant, universal, unexplained, and inexplicable, which serve as the basis of its inductions, reason seeks to discover the character of this invisible Being, which it salutes with the name of the First Cause, and makes accountable for all that passes around us, it remains without any power to encourage our hearts, and still less is it capable of giving them the true and perfect contentment. No; in practice, the word of the pure

reason in the question of our moral relations with God, is not a word of peace nor of filial confidence.*

How different is the word of revelation! Our God is no longer unknown. Keeping His impenetrable depth, and His inaccessible height, and His majestic and necessary incomprehensibility, He speaks of Himself, He describes Himself in human language. His Eternal Confidant becomes His witness among us. Jesus tells us of His Father, Whom He always contemplates, and whose Essence He has contemplated from eternity. He comes, He lives, He dies, to make Him known to us. Now, what does He tell us of Him? First of all, that His Father is an Infinite Sovereignty, which signifies not only an absolute dominion over all things, but also a Power without bounds; and this is an answer to the question of resources. The God of Jesus is greater than all, higher than all, stronger than all. Nothing binds Him, nothing influences Him, nothing determines Him. He establishes a vast system of laws, or perhaps one sole universal law, to rule His beautiful creation. Manifold, or only one, this law, which obliges all, leaves God entirely free.

* I have found the following in a Protestant little work: "When once the land of revelation is abandoned, we are forced to recognise the truth that neither nature, which is our mother, nor our reason, oblige us to believe in a God of love. This is a pure matter of imagination; all that theologians say in its regard is simple charlatanism."—Busken-Huet, Pastor of Harlem. An unhappy and too famous apostate of our time has written this abominable phrase: "Those alone arrive at the secret of life who know how to stifle their sadness, and to do without hope."—E. Renan, "The Book of Job," p. 88. This is the same thing as to say, that the secret of life is to know how to renounce life. Can we say more clearly that we are slaves, the apostles and instruments of that eternal despair which rules the empire of death?

There are laws which we call essential, because they are the rays projected on the creature by the splendid and supreme harmony of the Divine Being, and which, therefore, necessarily exist where creatures exist; but for God these laws are not true laws, that is to say, they are not separate laws for Him, and affecting His own Being. He is indebted to nothing; His independence is complete. He wishes what He wishes, only because He wishes it; and what He wishes it is always easy for Him to execute; nothing obliges Him to go back, nothing is able to stop Him, nothing troubles Him, nothing vexes Him; all fails which is opposed to His wisdom, all yields to His authority, all gives way to His good pleasure; and more, what we raise up as an obstacle He changes into a favourable means; and ordinarily, nothing serves His designs so effectually as the hindrances and impediments which are put in His way. He makes the night to be the harbinger of day. He constrains the devils to aid Him in the salvation of men. He makes Himself adored even when clothed with a garment of shame. He conquers the world by a cross. Such is He on whom depends our salvation, He of whom we have to receive all grace—He, in a word, Who makes it a precept to hope in Him. If between Him and ourselves any shadow of distrust arises, never, at least, ought it to come from the fear of finding Him without power. "O God," says the Wise Man, "Thy power is at hand, when Thou wilt" (Wisd. xii. 18); and again, Mordecai, says, in his prayer to God, "There is none that can resist Thy will, if Thou determine to save Israel" (Esther xiii. 9).

But further, our God, besides being an absolute Sovereign, is also unbounded goodness, or rather, He is, Goodness itself. This is another perfection of His Being

a second feature of His character, and, consequently, a new reason why we should hope in Him. God is good, inasmuch as He is all blessing; every blessing that can be desired and even conceived. He is good because, without going out of Himself, He is, of all Beings, the most large-hearted, the most liberal, the most generous. He is good because, in giving Himself thus interiorly, by essence and from all eternity, He gives Himself to His creatures also exteriorly with generosity, and in countless degrees of life, of beauty, and of felicity. All this constitutes Him good, as no one else can be. Compared with His own, the goodness of the Blessed Virgin does not merit to be called goodness; and that of the human Heart of Christ, which is vast enough to embrace the world, and a thousand worlds, has not even the greatness of an atom. This is what Jesus wished us to understand when, in reply to that young man who called Him "good Master," He said, "Why callest thou Me good? None is good but one, that is God" (St. Luke xviii. 19). God is something more than goodness. St. John says, He is Love (1 St. John iv. 8). Intrinsically, it is the same thing; but for us the idea of love adds something to the idea of goodness. Love assigns, so to speak, a term to goodness; it applies it, it appropriates it. Goodness is a treasure; love is the hand which draws from it to give it away. Saint Dionysius, the Areopagite, expresses magnificently this difference. "Divine love," he says, "is the first author of all that is good in beings. Eternal as Goodness, in the midst of which it lives, and not suffering its native fecundity to remain inactive, it has persuaded Goodness to exercise its sovereign power, and, incited by it, Goodness has produced the Universe.* The goodness of God

* Ipse enim amor divinus qui bonitatem in iis quæ sunt operatur,

is, then, loving. So much so, that it inspires Him to love even what is nothing; whence it comes that creatures exist. But if God is love, so that He loves what has no existence, with what affection does He not embrace what once He has made? With what ardent energy does He not wish to see His work finished, made happy, answering in every point to the eternal conception that He has had of it, and attaining the end for which He had at first given it existence? O my God! what a sweet mystery: a mystery which, explaining all, remains itself inexplicable, and which, defying all explanation, blinds and dazzles us with the most resplendent evidence! God loves. God loves us; He loves us because He is love. To exist, to love, and, now that we exist, to love us, is for Him one and the same thing, one and the same necessity! Is not hope, then, a duty for us all? Can any degree of hope whatever become an excess? If distrust is possible for us, is it reasonable? is it excusable?

You will say, there is sin. Alas! it is too true! Sin is everywhere, and everywhere it becomes a problem; it leads to a complication, it raises an obstacle, a problem for us, a complication in us, an obstacle before us; but for *God*, are there any problems?

Is it possible that we can hinder His designs, or place a barrier in His way? He stops if He pleases, but only

qui prius existit in bono superlatè, non sivit ipsum sine fœtu manere; sed potiùs movit eum ad operandum secundum excellentiam virtutis suæ omnium rerum effectricis. De Divinis Nomin., cap. iv., 5, 10. Farther on, speaking of love, he says: "It is thus that the Divine love makes us see that it has neither end nor beginning, like to an eternal circle, of which goodness is at once the surface, the centre, the radius, and the circumference; a circle which describes, in an invariable revolution, goodness, which is always identically the same, going and returning, without ever departing from itself."

because He wishes it: and wherever He pleases to pass, He passes. Sin injures God in the sense that it offends Him: never does it affect Him in the sense that it changes Him. He modifies and changes His acts: but, far from modifying His Essence, He does not change at all His first and principal disposition towards us, that is to say, the love He bears us. As in face of nothingness His goodness becomes love, so, in face of sin, His love becomes mercy: and when we have said this, we have said all. Yes, all is said: on the sole condition, however, that the sinner hopes: and, in certain respects, no one has such reasons to hope in God as the sinner. Doubtless the Divine sanctity has so great a horror for sin, that it obliges justice to punish it with frightful penalties; but it is precisely because mercy is incomparably more moved by sin, than by all the other misfortunes that can befall us. For if we regard it on the side of the punishments it merits, sin is the loss of God: it is, then, the *greatest evil*, and truly it is absolute misery. But what attracts, as a rule, the greatest compassion, if it is not the *greatest misery*? This is the reason, then, why the Divine mercy, in this matter, is more than ever *compassionate*; that the sinner, seeing God so full of *compassion*, might be led to repent of his sins, and, *trusting* and *hoping* in this infinite goodness, might *obtain pardon* and be saved. Whence you see that *anger* at sin is, in God, a fresh and more fruitful source of *pity* and of *goodness*, and becomes for us all, a new *ground of hope*.

However, it is not necessary to reason much on the *point*; and, *notwithstanding* the utility of the remarks we have just made, we might have been silent on the *subject*, and have furnished you at once with the support

that we have promised, in giving the real and integral word of the character of God, that is to say, of His Nature, as far as He regards and treats with us. It would be enough to open the Gospel, and to say to you: See Jesus! that sweet Infant, passing with such docility, from the hands of the Virgin who gives It suck, to the arms of the shepherds and wise men; that Youth, so pure, so profoundly silent, so peaceable; that Doctor, so simple; that humble Worker of miracles; that Physician, so compassionate; that good Samaritan; that good Shepherd; that Father of the prodigal son; that Protector of little children; that Brother of the poor; that Friend of publicans; that constant Companion of sinners; that Defender and Advocate of the woman taken in adultery; that undoubted Saint who converses so familiarly with the sinful woman of Samaria, and Who gives His Feet to the kisses of the unworthy and dishonoured Magdalen; that disowned King, Who weeps over His ungrateful country; that betrayed One, Who gives His Cheek to the traitor, and says to him, "My friend"—in a word, that tender, that innocent, that all-obedient Victim, Who lets Himself be led as a lamb; Who, without even uttering a reproach or the least murmur of complaint, gives Himself to scourges, to blows, to be spit upon, to every kind of shame, to all sorts of pains, and finishes by dying on a cross, for those even who nailed Him to it. Behold God—not God transfused, as it were, into a human form! for "He who sees Jesus, sees His Father" (St. John xiv. 9)—but God Himself made visible; God such as He is in the centre of His Being, such as He beholds Himself in the infinite brightness of His knowledge, as He shows Himself to us in the measure in which our mortal eyes are capable of such a vision. Whence it comes that, with

regard to His perfections, and even His goodness, the reality infinitely surpasses all that the inestimable vision of Jesus enables us to conceive. Once more, behold Him Who administers our interests, Him Who holds in His Hand the share in Paradise which His Heart destines for us. Had He made us no special promise, had He been satisfied with telling us what He is, leaving the revelation to another time, of the end for which He had created us, you will grant that our hope in Him would be well founded, and that all mistrust would be a real outrage.

But I have told you He has done something else besides revealing Himself to us. He is rich, He is magnificent, He is prodigal of His gifts, He loves us. "O God," said David to Him, "Thy testimonies are become exceedingly credible" (Ps. xcii. 5). What He has done for the truth proposed to faith, He has done for the beatitude offered to hope: He has strengthened it with invaluable guarantees.

On this matter of our salvation, and of the graces which procure it, God is bound to us: He has given us His *word*. You know what it is among ourselves to give one's word; it is almost to give oneself. We say with reason, as the man is, so is his word. One's word, when it is promised, all men regard as a thing most sacred. It forms the basis of all contracts; it is preëminently the main support of society. When we believe in the word of a man, his other faults go for nothing. Man has lied a hundred times; he has done worse than violate his promises; he has been a traitor even to his oath. Well, in certain particular cases we remember this, and take precautions in consequence. We require that the word or promise should be backed by other guarantees; for

example, that it should be uttered or made, before witnesses, signed, sealed, and registered by a public officer; but when there is a certain degree of affirmation and authenticity, we always have faith in it, and act in accordance with our faith. Before our reason obliges us to act thus, instinct inclines us to it. Naturally the child believes its mother, and the disciple his Master. There is, doubtless, in this word of man some mysterious shadow of the mystery which is in God; and this shadow acts upon our souls. But if such is the empire and efficacy of the shadow, what virtue resides in the substance? A word of God, what is it in itself? A word that God gives to man, what is it for man?

If there is a character which is striking and divine in the visible universe, it is that of stability; stability in the beings which constitute it, stability in the laws which rule those beings, stability in the phenomena which succeed one another in the administration of those laws. For thousands of years the day rises after the night, the night comes after the day; spring succeeds winter, and summer follows spring. "What is it that hath been," saith the Wise Man, "the same thing that shall be"; "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth standeth for ever" (Eccles. i. 4, 9). The same firmament floods it with its brightness, and penetrates it with its influences. What fixity! What certainty! What peace in the course of so many centuries of existence! If I fall asleep in the evening, I am not certain of rising again in the morning, though, because of my soul, I am immortal. But at the hour when the shades of night begin to fall around me to-day, can I doubt that the sun will rise again to-morrow, though the sun and the world are one day to perish together?

(2 Peter iii. 10). Now the secret of this stability, and the steady permanence of this beautiful order, is the word of God; for "He spoke and they were made; He commanded and they were created" (Ps. xxxii. 9). He spoke again, and all things subsist. His word makes the solidity of the heavens, (*Ibid.* 6) and upholds all creatures, (Heb. i. 3) not only visible, but invisible; not only souls, but angels. But what marvel is it that this word has the power of consolidating all things! It is the substantial and eternal affirmation of God; it is the Divinity affirming Itself; it is absolute Being saying "I am." Every creature is in motion and fluctuation, compared with the unchanging fixity of this Divine word! The humanity of Christ, which is the very throne of God, and, consequently, more firm than anything else in the whole universe, has a fixity borrowed from the Eternal Word.

Now, this word God gives us; it is a compact between Him and us. It is a light, which shows Him to us, and thus it establishes our faith; it is a title which guarantees Him to us, and hence it is the ground of hope; it is doctrine; it is a promise; and as a promise, what does it contain? All we have need of; all that, outside of sin, and of a foolish imagination, we can desire or dream of; and much more,—all that God dreams for us, in those sweet and soothing, and infinite dreams, which, in the love He bears us, soothes His eternal quietude. From our deliverance from evil, at first progressive, then absolute and entire, even to the possession of the supreme felicity, of which, when we arrive at it, we shall never be deprived, all is divinely promised us. Certainly our life here on earth is manifold, and subject to many accidents and changes. We can more easily count the blades of grass in an immense meadow filled with herbage, than we can

tell the circumstances, so many and various, with which our life is sown from the cradle to the grave. But as, when the autumn is come, the heavens are pleased to give a drop of dew every morning to each of those innumerable blades, so God has a ravishing joy in appropriating a special promise to each of those circumstances, and, therefore, to each of those situations, in which we are placed. We may easily verify this by the Holy Scriptures. The promises of God, then, cover the whole extent of our human life, and enter into its minutest details. A sponge plunged into the sea, quickly imbibes the water; so man upon earth continually receives from our Heavenly Father the assurances of His protection; and all, without exception, tend directly to our salvation; they all end there, they are all means to attain it.

Besides, this is not the exclusive privilege of the children of the Gospel, although, since Jesus, in Whom everything has its substance, and mounts to the height of perfection, the promise, which is so sure, passes its own limits, so as to cause our hope really to overflow. Such is the administration by which the infinite love of the Creator has willed to govern all His creatures. It dates from the origin of things; and, so far from the fall of man making any essential difference, it has rather, as to this world, made perfect its conditions. Since that time the promises have become more numerous, but, above all, they have become more touching. The fact is, that they are everywhere, they are express, and they are addressed to all.

Amidst so many bitter tears which flowed from their eyes, Adam and Eve—guilty, punished, driven forth from Paradise, knowing that they were deprived of grace, and

that, as far as lay in their power, they had ruined all their posterity—were yet able to read in the wounded, but not the closed, Heart of God, this sovereign, bright, and indestructible dogma: "God does not desire the death of the sinner, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezech. xxxiii. 11); that "He will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. ii. 4). And what they thus read, their children could, in their turn, read also—Cain as well as Abel, and all their posterity. The *Word* was a sun, and this sun shone forth for all the world. It rose upon the just, but also upon the unjust (St. Matt. v. 45). Never did it set, never did it suffer eclipse; and if it was sometimes covered with clouds, it was never itself the cause of that obscurity. This Word, you know, fills our Scriptures; the Scriptures have been constituted to contain it.* In fact, though the Divine Word has in itself all its power and virtue, and can borrow nothing from aught else, yet God has willed, in His compassionate and wise goodness, to give it every possible guarantee. He has made it a holy monument, and, as it were, a public document. He has placed it in our midst, in the splendour of an authenticity without parallel. He has stamped it with His own seal, and established it by incontestable proofs. He has intermingled with it, in all parts, the prophecies of the future. He has sealed it

* The Bible is, above all, the book of the promises. It was with the profound conviction of this truth that Jonathan wrote to the Spartans these noble and sweet words: "There were letters sent long ago to Onias, the high-priest from Arius, who reigned then among you, to signify that you are our brethren, as the copy here underwritten doth specify. We, though we needed none of these things, having for our comfort the holy books that are in our hands, have agreed to renew this brotherhood and friendship."—Mach. xii.

with the seal of a multitude of miracles. He has instituted, in order to guard and to transmit it, first, the jealous synagogue, then, His faithful Church. He has created an Apostolate to preach it, the Pontificate to interpret it, and martyrdom to confirm it. All those who have lived in the order of grace, all those who have acted, laboured, and suffered for the truth, have acted, laboured, and suffered for the spread of this Divine Word; and it will be so to the end of time. Heaven and earth are its witnesses, I mean, the Saints in heaven and on earth (Heb. xii. 1); for as to the heaven we see, and the earth we tread under our feet, they "will pass away, but the Word of God will not pass away" (St. Matt. xxiv. 35).

God loves all that exists, and in the immense family of His creatures His Heart makes no exclusion (Wisdom xi. 25). "Can a woman forget her sucking child, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will I not forget thee, saith the Lord" (Isaias xlix. 5). "He will have mercy on thee, more than a mother" (Eccli. iv. 11). "I will bring upon her as it were a river of peace, and as an overflowing torrent, the glory of the Gentiles, which you shall suck; you shall be carried at the breasts, and upon the knees they shall caress you" (Isaias lxvi. 2). And again, and much more: "Even to your old age I am the same, and to your grey hairs I will carry you. I have made you, and I will bear, I will carry, and I will save you" (*Ibid.* xlvi. 4). You have, perhaps, committed so many sins, that "from the sole of the foot unto the crown of the head there is no soundness in you. Yet wash yourselves, be clean, take away the evil of your devices from My Eyes, cease to do perversely, go humbly, invoke Me with confidence: then

come and accuse Me, saith the Lord: if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as wool" (*Ibid.* i. 6, 16). "His redemption is a treasure" (Ps. cxxix. 7); and once that He begins to pardon, it becomes most abundant and inexhaustible (Isaias lv. 7). I am citing, you know, His own words; and I should never end were I to recall to you all that might be said on this subject. In fact, what can one say more than what I am now going to add? and could He Himself engage to do more? All that we can wish for, that is true, just, and good, and can make us happy, and holy, we have but to ask it to obtain it: the more valuable and precious the object of our petition, the more sure we are that our petition will be graciously heard; and if it is infinite happiness that we demand, the success of our prayer becomes altogether infallible. The Gospel is express on this point, and Jesus Christ has said nothing more clearly: "Amen, amen, *whatsoever you shall ask the Father* in My Name, that *I will do*, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (St. John xiv. 13). "And if you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you *shall ask whatever you will*, and it shall be done unto you" (*Ibid.* xv. 7). Thus He not only puts a strong obligation on Himself for our sakes, but He does this by oath. In truth, saith St. Paul, "God, meaning more abundantly to show to the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel, interposed an oath, that by two immutable things (His Word and His oath, in which it is impossible for God to lie), we may have the strongest comfort, who have fled for refuge, to hold fast the hope set before us, which we have, as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm, and which entereth in even within the veil, where the forerunner, Jesus, is entered for us, made a High-priest for ever,

according to the order of Melchisedech" (Heb. vi. 16-20).

Lastly, I have told you there is yet something else besides the Nature of God for our confidence to lean upon, something else besides even His Word: there are His pledges. God finds no obligation too great to contract in our regard. It is because He sees our weakness, and the danger of so many seductions which surround and beset us? Is it that His own love impels Him to anticipate the times marked by His wisdom? Always He seems unable to restrain the overflowings of His Heart; and from the vast ocean of His life, of which eternity is the natural shore, the great waves pass beyond their bounds, and flow down to us in streams. Yes, even in this world, where all is so uncertain, when at every step we may fall into the abyss, in the midst of our darkness, of our combats, of our failings, and of our hateful sins, God gives us the first-fruits of all the blessings He has promised; He saves us, as far as He can, and truly sows the substance of Heaven in our hearts.

We are speaking of the Divine pledges; they are very many, and yet there is but one. There is but one, which has many forms, many states and conditions, many virtues, and many operations. In its unity, it exceeds all calculation; in its simplicity, it is equivalent to all. It ensures all, it contains all. It is this living, decisive, absolute pledge of which St. Paul has written: "Now in giving us this pledge, hath He not also with it given us all things" (Rom. viii. 32)? It is Jesus, "the gift of God" (St. John iv. 10). For it is the truth, that "God has so loved the world as to give for its salvation His Only-begotten Son" (*Ibid.* iii. 16). From the beginning of this treatise on Hope we have spoken only of Jesus.

He is personally the character, that is, the stamp of God (Heb. i. 3), and the full revelation of His Nature. He is personally "His Word": you now see how He is personally His pledge. Since He has given Himself to us under this title, He becomes a world of reality for us in the order of our salvation. In truth, says the Apostle, "the Son of God, Jesus Christ, Who was preached among you by us, was not, it is and it is not, but it is, was in Him," that is to say, that which is positive and affirmative; and all the promises God has made us have in Him, in Jesus, their entire and real existence (2 Cor. i. 19).

In a word, Jesus is Himself our Salvation, it is His state of existence; we may say, that it is His Essence, not His Essence as the Son of God, but His Essence as God made Man; it is for this precisely, that He is called Jesus; Jesus is His true Name, His whole Name, His only Name. But who will say to what extent the Word made Flesh is Jesus? He is an ocean of salvation, an inexhaustible source of pardon, a public fountain of sanctification, a deluge of grace, of light, of peace, and of heavenly life. St. Paul says, that "in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Coloss. ii. 3). And in Him are heaped up all the merits, by virtue of which, we may, and can, be saved. Each step He took, when on earth, each sigh that He breathed towards heaven, each pulsation of His Sacred Heart, has been a fresh sign of the ardent will He has always had, that we should be with Him in paradise; and all these united, have deposited an immense treasure in the Hands of His Heavenly Father, to purchase for us this beatifying possession. The succession of His mysteries, in this point of view, is only the accumulation of debts which He contracts in our name, and which are paid by Him

to His Father, Who, being naturally the Creditor of all His creatures, allows Himself, by His love, to become their Debtor. A single document signed by Jesus, and presented by us to His Father, would suffice to pay for all the delights of heaven. Man, provided with this document, should then have an unbounded hope of his salvation. Now, it is not one document that Jesus places in our hands, but documents without number; their enumeration would be impossible, and He Himself, it seems, cannot count them. The whole of His interior and exterior life was spent to pay the price of our beatitude. In our Creed, we chant this great fact; and this is the reason why there is not, for our humanity, a greater glory than that with which the Creed invests it.

"It is for us men," we say therein, "and for our salvation, that the Son of God was made Man, that He was born of the Virgin Mary, that He suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, that He rose again the third day, that He ascended into heaven, and that He sits on the right Hand of the Father." Thus, His crib, His cross, His tomb, which, in itself, is only the tomb of death, but for Him, and for all those who love Him, it is the cradle of a glorious life—a life divinely happy and imperishable; that glory which shone around Him, on the Mountain of Olives, and ended by concealing Him from the dazzled eyes of the Apostles; that ascension above Angels, and Archangels, principalities, and powers, and above all that is named either in earth or in heaven; that sitting now eternally, on the very Throne of the Divinity, by the side of His Father, Whose authority and power He shares, though, at the same time, He remains our Mediator, our Advocate, and our Brother—all this is for us, it belongs to us. And not only is all this the property of the human race, taken

in the mass and collectively, but it is so of each individual in particular. No man has lived, nor will live, on the earth, who, while looking on the crucifix, has not the right and the duty to cry out with the Apostle, "He has loved me, and given Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). What do you say, then, of this pledge? What could God do more than He has done? (Isaias v. 4.) What distrust is there that ought not to expire at the foot of that cross? What hope is there which may not be built upon the stone which has been rolled away from that open sepulchre? What is there a merchant will refuse to give to one in whose name the articles have been already purchased, and paid for in advance? And what is there you can desire, demand, or claim, the price of which is not already entirely paid to God, by Jesus Christ? Grace is the gift which God has bestowed upon us in Jesus: it is clear that this gift is absolutely a free one; but it is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Saviour, our Victim, our Head; grace, our grace and our glory, is a true justice. "The just," said Jesus to His Father, "wait for Me, till Thou reward Me," till You have paid Me, in them, for My services (Ps. cxli. 8). And the Mass! that substantial, universal, incessant, radiation of the bloody Sacrifice accomplished by Jesus on Calvary; that living and perpetual trophy of the invasion, which immolated love makes on the world to subject to it Himself, and bend to His will all that exercises a sovereign dominion over all creatures, as to number, and time, and place; the Mass, putting before our eyes that Victim, which has disappeared for eighteen centuries from our earth, and reproducing at every instant, in all ages, under every sky, and simultaneously, not only the death of that holy and adorable Victim, but His whole

life, His Divine life, His human life, in all its states, in all its phases, in all its beauties, in all its prodigious powers; reproducing it for God, Whom it glorifies, Whom it appeases, Whom it ravishes with joy, Whom it wholly masters; reproducing it for us, to whom it gives, if we are willing, the substance of all it has obtained from that God, captivated and fettered; the Mass, in fine, which cries aloud during the whole length of the world's history, cries aloud in every tongue and to all mankind without exception, to little and great, to saint and to sinner: "See how God loves you!" for behold, in the Mass Jesus Christ immolates Himself again for you!" Ah, you will agree with me that the Mass is such a pledge, that, after having received it, especially if we received it by assisting at it every day, we ought not only to hope, but to live inebriated with hope. Saint Teresa, pressed down under the weight of the benefits of God, asked Him one day to tell her the secret of enabling her to pay her debt of gratitude. The Holy Spirit put it into her heart to hear one Mass, after which she would discharge her debt.

Ah! were all hell to rush in upon you as a torrent of despair, and Satan were to whisper into your ear, as he did into the ear of Judas, a thousand likely reasons why you should not trust in God, assist at but one Mass, meditate profoundly what the Mass is; and the light full of love which shall stream forth from the Host, shall destroy all those phantoms of darkness, and, silencing the great calumniator of God, shall bring back into your heart that holy brightness which shall give it peace, because it gives it faith; and which shall dilate and expand it, because it makes it hope.

But the Mass is something else besides a Sacrifice: it is a Sacrament. This same Jesus, Who delivers Himself

for us as a Victim to His Father, gives Himself to us in Communion. "Oh, holy Feast," sings the Church with St. Thomas, "in which Christ is taken, a remembrance is made of His Passion, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given us."* The Eucharistic Communion being the appropriation to each one of the work of Christ, he who communicates receives personally the redemption of the entire world. St. Paul writes, that to "communicate unworthily is to eat and drink his own judgment, and his own condemnation" (1 Cor. xi. 29); therefore to communicate worthily is to eat and drink his own acquittal, and his own salvation. "He who eats the Flesh of Christ, and drinks His Blood, abideth in Christ, and Christ abideth in Him," says our Lord in the Holy Gospel (St. John vi. 57). Both thus find themselves united, not only in one spirit, but even in one flesh, so that, says St. Cyril, "they form but one body."† St. Leo, speaking of the Christian, teaches that he is not the same after Baptism that he was before; but such is then his union with Jesus Christ, that it produces an identity between them, and that the flesh of the baptised becomes the Flesh of the Crucified.‡ What, then, shall we say of the Christian coming from the holy table, since the Eucharistic Communion is the consummation on earth of the union commenced in Baptism? If, then, grace and the Sacraments so unite us to Jesus,

* Antiphon on the Feast of Corpus Christi.

† Uno corpore, suo nimirum, omnes fideles benedicens per mysticam communionem, cum eos sibi, tum inter se concorporales efficit. —S. Cyrill. Alex. Lib. ii. in Joann.

‡ Susceptus a Christo, Christumque suscipiens, non idem est post lavacrum qui ante baptismum fuerat, sed caro regenerati fit caro crucifixi.—Serm. xiv. de Passione.

that, without any usurpation or lie, we can present ourselves to God, as being Jesus Christ Himself, I ask you what God will refuse, or can ever refuse us, in the order of our sanctification, which is that of His own glory in us? It is much more than sympathy which obliges Him, then, to bid us welcome; it is much more than tenderness—it is the respect which He owes to His own Eternal Son; it is the infinite love He bears Him; it is the very necessity of His Nature, and the invincible strength of His Divine Paternity. Keep, then, only what you have received; continue to be what grace has made you; become living branches of that Vine in which, by His own Will, He has engrafted you, and in which you are rooted. Your glory may still be deferred; that of your Head was so, as long as He lived in the condition in which you now are; but it is assured to you, infallibly assured. And this is what made St. Paul exclaim: "We are already saved by hope" (Rom. viii. 24), and that "in the Lord," that is, in Jesus, "we may, and we ought to, rejoice always" (Philipp. iv. 4).

In reality, true joy—the source of all created beatitude, the personal and intimate joy of God the Holy Spirit—is already in us; and He is there in a state which is regular and fixed; for we have all along told you His Presence in us is the essential foundation of our normal state, that is, of our condition as Christians. In Himself, as you know, this sweet and sublime Spirit is the final term of the Divine life: it is its conclusion, its consummation, and, so to speak, its seal. In the world, and among mankind, it is the conclusion of the life of Jesus, the fruit of His merits and of His sacrifice, the loving efficacy of His installation in glory—in a word, His last gift. Now, you have received this gift: you possess the Holy Spirit—not yet, indeed, so that you cannot lose it: it is a treasure which

is kept "in frail and earthen vessels" (2 Cor. iv. 7); it is a trust you may abuse; a germ which, by your fault, may, here below, be injured and perish. You possess it, as the Scripture saith, as a pledge, and as the first-fruits (Ephes. i. 14; Rom. viii. 23); yet you possess it. It is your own property, and, as long as you wish it, your permanent property; for, so far as He is concerned, He comes to remain with us always, and never is He the first to leave us. In one sense, there is no single blessing in the world which so much belongs to you as this; for whatsoever God has given you besides, whether in nature or in grace, He has given you only to render you actually worthy of, and able to receive, this principal gift. Baptism delivered to you, first, this Holy Spirit, and all the other Sacraments have served only to strengthen His Presence in you, to perfect His empire, and to develop its action. He is Himself that charity of Christ, which "presses you" (2 Cor. v. 14) without relaxation, and with so much earnestness. He is incessantly sanctifying you, and consequently incessantly saving you, and you have only to let Him work. He is the water that springeth up to eternal life (St. John iv. 14). As He inspired Jesus in all His ways, leading Him always to His Teacher, so He urges you—you also (Rom. viii. 14), in the same paths, and towards the same end, and, in due proportion, with the same vigour. Nothing in creation so flies to its centre as this Holy Spirit of Jesus urges you to Paradise. It is by tending towards this end, and with this fervour, that, although being a joy, He becomes in our souls that "unspeakable groan" (Rom. viii. 26) to which St. Paul refers; that, being peace, He manifests Himself by that violence of which our Lord speaks (St. Matt. xi. 12); that, being love which beatifies, He is changed to a devouring zeal. Ah! your salvation,

your sanctity, therefore, is the great want of this all-powerful and faithful Spirit: it is His mission to labour for it; it is His honour to succeed in it.

And see how, not from indigence, but from a magnificent profusion, and the better to manifest to us the fervour of His love, this Divine Spirit makes use of all things! It is He Who gave you the Blessed Virgin: another marvellous foundation of Christian hope, another pledge of the will God has to save you; but a pledge so astonishing, so eloquent, that, were it the only one, it would suffice. The Spirit filled Mary with love for you, but with a love which is the overflow and the extension of that with which He floods her own heart for Jesus, the Son she conceived by Him.

And the Church, in which you are, and whose you are; the Church of which this Spirit is the soul; the Church with its Angels,* its blessed Saints, its earthly hierarchy, its powers, its Sacraments, its virtues—what are all these but a sort of universal conspiracy contrived by God to save us? Why does the Church of Christ exist? Wherefore does it labour? Wherefore does it suffer? For what reason does it die? For, though it is continually giving life to all, St. Paul says it "dies every day" (1 Cor. xv. 41). Is it not for you and for your salvation? The Church—but it is Heaven come down to you upon earth—the Heaven clothed for you in sensible forms and human attractions (Osee xi. 4); the Heaven which pursues you, which exhorts you, which besieges you, which besets you round, and which, directly you are willing, penetrates and possesses you.

* St. Paul, speaking of the Angels, says: "Are they not all ministering spirits sent to minister for those who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?"—Heb. i. 14.

Thus, you see that God Himself is His own pledge. He is in you, the Seed, of which He intends presently to reap the harvest. Ah! Lord, how white it is already, and this dear Seed is already in full ear! Had you nothing, you to whom I speak, but your common and elementary title of Baptism, I would tell you—I should have the right to tell you—you are saved in principle; the principal thing in your salvation is effected. For, were you predestinated to equal in sanctity St. Michael, St. Joseph, or, by impossibility, the Blessed Virgin, there would be infinitely less distance between the state of grace in which you actually are, and the glory you will hereafter obtain, than between the state of sin from which God has withdrawn you, and the state of peace in which you now are.

If, then, God has already done for you that which is the most important, do you doubt that He wlll do for you what is less so? Ah! read it, read your salvation; read it, written with the Hand of God, on all the pages of your life; on its public pages, on its secret pages, on its joyous pages, on its sorrowful pages; I will add, even on its shameful pages, by reason of the glory which God has specially drawn from them for Himself, in causing so much spiritual profit to issue from them. Read, I say, this salvation, in all those kind and spontaneous attentions, in those skilful preservations, in those opportune aids, in those repeated, generous, infinite pardons, in the manifest, incessant, innumerable effects of that merciful love which, to use the words of the Royal Prophet, "have followed you all the days of your life" (Ps. xxii. 6). In a word, and above all, read it in your vocation. There are souls so affected, when they reflect on the distinguished honour they have received in being called to Religion or to the Priesthood, and, consequently, of being consecrated to God as Reli-

gious and as Priests, that they have been seized with sudden fear and alarm, on account of the sublimity, the gravity, and the number of duties which their high vocation involves, and of the rigorous account they shall have to render. Certainly these souls are right, for a multitude of reasons, and who can blame them? But those appear more enlightened, more holily inspired, perhaps, who, delivering themselves up in advance, and with a joyous peace, to all the visitations, seen or unforeseen, of God's justice, behold, especially in their vocation, the sign of the true predilection of God, and place in it the foundation of a firmer hope, and of a more tender confidence in their Creator. I have now spoken to you of the great supports of Christian hope: it remains for me to show you the qualities this hope ought to have, in order to ensure our salvation by sanctifying our life.

II.

Although we have especially spoken to you hitherto of the foundations of our hope, what I have said should be sufficient to give you an exact and an almost complete notion of this admirable virtue. You have, then, understood that hope is the interior cry of our Baptism, and, as it were, the active consciousness that Baptism gives us of our incomparable destinies. It is the hunger and thirst of our supernatural being, the regular movement of those supernatural wings which God also gives to our soul the moment that He justifies it. It is the practical radiation of faith. Between the glory of heaven, and that faith which begins in us this celestial life, it is what the stalk is between the germ and the ripe ear which perfects it; it is our faculty of ascension into the brightness and the powers of heaven, whither we are attracted by the sacred magic

of the Divine attractions, and by which we really participate in the victorious strength of God. It forms, therefore, an essential part of our worship, and it adapts us more and more to that adorable Trinity, which it enables us both to honour and to win. It is also a sort of communion with the life of Jesus on the earth, and of His progress to His Heavenly Father. In a word, it is the elementary and temporary life of love. Evidently it has a finite existence only: love alone never dies (1 Cor. xiii. 8). But while time lasts, love cannot be conceived without hope. For union, which is the the necessary end of love, never being consummated on earth, where there is no aspiration of love, this union cannot exist; but for love to aspire is to hope. No doubt there are, in this present life, for those who are journeying towards heaven, moments of Divine repose. There are such moments, because union with God is already real; and this union can become so great as to give to man, poor creature as he is, the feeling of entire satisfaction. But these heavenly calms, though they rejoice the soul, do not last; and their ordinary fruit, as their holiest effect, is that, while they leave in our minds a more elevated knowledge of the unspeakable excellence of God, and, consequently, a more clear view of the distance that separates us from Him, we are more fully conscious of our exile, and have a more ardent desire to see it ended. Now, in a heart that is faithful to God, this desire and this consciousness are the same thing as a more perfect hope. It is clear that in such holy souls, and especially in those favoured moments of which I am speaking, love allures hope, much more than hope allures love: sometimes even love has no consciousness of being in the company of hope, but in these holy souls both are always together; and, though hope may be want-

ing in vigilance, yet in the company of love it can never die.

To enumerate the qualities that hope should have it would be necessary to multiply adjectives almost indefinitely. However, we shall confine ourselves to its three principal qualities; and we think we shall have said all that relates to this subject if we make you clearly understand that your hope should be enlightened, laborious, and invincible.

First, it should be enlightened. We often repeat it to you; and it is our security, our glory, and our joy, to say it again and again: we are "the children of light (Eph. v. 8). Truth is the principle of our virtues, the first source of our merits, the root of our sanctity. Light, a divine light, presides over all our actions; and it is only when these actions are luminous that God recognises, accepts, and rewards them. Our hope, then, ought to be enlightened. It will be so, knowing very exactly what we have to hope for, in whom we ought to hope, and on what conditions we make this three-fold knowledge the constant rule of our thoughts, of our feelings, of our works, in the matter of hope.

What we have to hope for we have already stated in the commencement of this treatise; it is, above all, *beatitude*. Not any kind of beatitude, as a human or angelic beatitude would be, or even any created beatitude, but the uncreated beatitude itself, that is to say, God, inasmuch as He is His Own beatitude, and by an unheard of act of love, He communicates Himself to His creatures, in order to be immediately and personally their happiness. Doubtless, this free communication of an absolute happiness, is, indeed, a created fact; and if we consider it precisely in the creatures which enjoy it, we must allow

that this happiness is also created. It has a measure, it has, then, a date. But in itself, in its substance, in its source, in its bestowal, this happiness is without date, without measure, and uncreated; it is the intimate state of God, and truly God Himself; and it is precisely for this reason that hope is a theological virtue.

Ah! you who are the daughters of God, you who are His virgins, and also His spouses, do not let the splendour of this last end grow dim within you, and take care that your hope continue inviolably attached to it. Never bring down your hope to a lower level, nor limit its extent. Hope for nothing less than God; for, as St. Thomas grandly explains it, this goodness, which makes God beneficent towards His creatures, is nothing less than His essence.

It is clear from this, that it disposes Him to give us nothing that is inferior to Himself.* Raise up your minds, then, and your hearts, even to this height. It is the design of God to bestow this thrice-holy happiness upon you. Let His design be your own also; and, above all, understand well, that there, on high, is that immovable point of view, according to which, He labours to direct your life and to fashion your soul. If you do not put yourselves there also, if you do not take that standpoint yourselves, the conduct of God in your regard will be unintelligible; you will often find in it a subject of scandal. If, on the contrary, you view things as God views them; if especially your heart delights in so regarding them; if, in a word, you make your paradise of this hope, every place in this world will be bright with light,

* Non minus ab eo sperandum est quàm sit ipse, cum non sit minor ejus bonitas, per quam bona creaturæ communicat quam ejus essentia.—2da 2dæ Quæst. xvii. art 2.

every way will become smooth under your feet, and your whole life, with its shadows, its vicissitudes, its deceptions, its ruins, its miseries, and its many sufferings, will only be a banquet which God will provide hourly for your hope.

You will feel—and with what delight!—that everything is impelling you forward, that everything is preparing your final deliverance, that everything is hastening on the coming of that day whose sun shall never set, when you shall possess all blessings, in one only blessing. Labour, then, yourselves to attain it, while passing chastely and fervently through all those phantoms of paradise which men call the joys of earth. Go beyond all that you see, raise your thoughts and your desires above what is temporal, making use of all as a stepping-stone, and so much the more as the joy offered you, which you may have even already tasted, is higher and more intense. These are the holy *nights*, of which the saints speak so much.* These are the voluntary *sorrows*, of which Jesus Christ says in the Gospel, that blessed are they who dedicate themselves to them (St. Matt. v. 3).† Enjoyment is, here below, the great enemy of hope. The one journeys on only to stop; the other is always advancing. The one says: "I am satisfied;" the other cries out: "I am dying with hunger." Decide in favour of hope, against her seductive adversary. Be courageously faithful to it, and, abandoning yourselves to its action, seek incessantly what St. Paul so well calls, "the better substance" (Heb. x. 34), and walk on with a firm step towards the

* St. John of the Cross treats sweetly of this practice, in the 16th and 26th chap. of the 3rd book of the "Ascent of Mount Carmel."

† Luctus est de omissione charorum.—S. August. de Serm. Dom. in Monte.

"city that is to come" (*Ibid.* xiii. 14), which God Himself has built for you; or, rather, which He has not built, but only opened to you; for this city is His Own blessed, loving Bosom, full of love that can never change. I do not know any other means which more quickly and more decidedly can break your inward bonds, cure you of vain desires, of vain curiosities, of vain fears, of vain vexations, and make you, in a word, truly and totally poor, disinterested, valiant, holily indifferent, and sweetly patient. But if I do not know anything which can more effectually sanctify you than hope (and it is what the Scripture tells us throughout), I do not know any process more simple and more mighty, in the cultivation of this hope than to occupy your mind often, habitually, and fervently, with the sublime object it hopes for. It is, without doubt, what David meant, when he tells us, "he had in his mind the eternal years" (Ps. lxxvi. 6). Have them especially in your heart: for we cannot, without confusion of mind, state what our desires ordinarily are on the subject of the beatific vision. Their deplorable rarity, their unjustifiable coldness, tell us, only too clearly, how weak is our faith, and how imperfect is our hope. Alas! it is so with many Religious, with many Priests, that we are compelled to say with the Prophet: that this "land of the living," this country where all have a cradle and none have a tomb, because the cradle of each is infinite life giving itself in its source; this place, where "is the beauty of peace," and "wealthy rest," (Isaias xxxii. 18), and eternal contentment, this heaven, in a word, which ought to be the great and passionate desire of all men, and their continual pre-occupation, they have regarded and treated as if it had no real existence (Ps. cv. 24).

What, then, do we expect besides, and what other blessings than that of heaven, does the light of the faith offer to our hope? I have already told you: all that conducts us to the end, all that corrects us, purifies us, and lifts us up; all that tends to aid our growth in Jesus, increasing the growth of Jesus Himself in us—in a word, grace under all its forms, and with all its virtues. We ought to hope for grace, and above all, the grace which is indispensable. You all know that saying, which is so true, so plain, so learned, so simple, and so profound, of our admirable St. Augustine, a saying that the Church has made its own by inserting it in the text of the Council of Trent: "God does not command what is impossible; but in commanding, admonishes us to do what we can, to ask grace to do what we cannot do of ourselves, and He helps us to do it."* Ah! if it be needful that you should labour, that you should struggle, that you should suffer, or that you should even die, and die upon a cross, since it is God Who wishes it, do not doubt that He has already for you in His Hand, if He has not already placed it in your own, the *grace* to die, to suffer, to combat, and to act. Doubt here would be blindness, forgetfulness, injustice; it would be a wound inflicted on the Heart of Jesus, and perhaps a much greater wound inflicted on your own.

But I do not tell you only to expect of God the grace which is indispensable. Have you ever detected God in giving you only what was indispensable? Certainly, He can give it, and if He did so, He would do what was

* Deus impossibilia non jubet, sed jubendo monet et facere quod possis, et petere quod non possis, et adjuvat ut possis.—St. Aug. De naturâ et gratiâ, cet 43. Trident. Sess. vi. cap. ii.

just, holy, and adorable. But does He ever act so? Has He acted so with you? Ah, if there is any semblance of His acting so, I will tell you the day and hour that it occurred. It was the day and the hour when your hope in Him had grown weak. David ventured to say of God, "With the perverse, Thou wilt be perverted" (Ps. xvii. 27); that is to say, with him who is not straightforward with you, you will not act straightforwardly. With much more reason may we say, "With him who diminishes his hope in You, You become also, O my God, contracted in Your liberality; and every heart which is distrustful makes Your Hand sparing." Expect, then, with confidence, of God the abundance of His Grace. For it is of faith that He wishes to give it to you; for grace, in its essence, is that life of which Jesus has said, "I am come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (St. John x. 10). Besides, even in the natural creation, is not abundance the characteristic sign of God. Magnificence is everywhere in His works, and prodigality in His gifts. How much more so in the order of grace, of which that of nature is but the shadow and the prelude! Hope, then, for abundance of grace; hope for superabundance. I have told you, with Isaias, that God is "bountiful to forgive" (Isaias lv. 7). He is bountiful also to console, bountiful to assist, bountiful in all things. And if David loves so much to repeat the phrase, in the 118th Psalm, that he "*more than* hopes" (v. 43), that "he hopes exceedingly" in God, it is because the grace of God super-abounded in him. Our Lord, one day, instructed His servant St. Mechtilde, on this subject, saying, "The more anyone confides in Me, and piously presumes on My goodness, the more, and infinitely more, he obtains from Me, for it

is impossible that anyone should not receive what faith has made him holily hope for."*

May you hope in God, even for temporal favours? Yes —in the degree in which they concern your salvation and your sanctification. It is clear that, in themselves, these temporal blessings cannot be the object of supernatural hope; yet they may become so, by all the considerations which more or less directly connect them with our end. This is why our Lord, when He solemnly promised to hear our petitions, made no condition or reserve. He said, "All that you shall ask shall be granted to you" (St. John xiv. and xv). "If you shall ask anything in My Name, that I will do," and truly, in that sublime and universal prayer which He Himself has taught us, and which, in the seven demands which compose it, manifestly tells us what we are to hope for, there are no less than four which regard earthly and temporal blessings. It is the remark of St. Augustine.† But take care, also, and you especially who are religious, take care, I say, to remember that these temporal blessings have, for Christians, only a relative value in relation to their eternal life; and therefore to consider them independently of this relation is to become the victim of a delusion; that to desire and to ask them for their own sake, without this one necessary condition, is to place our foot in a false, perilous, and ruinous path; and even when you desire them in view of higher blessings, they should invariably preserve in your mind the character

* "Quantum quis mihi credere et de bonitate meâ piè præsumere potest, tantum et infinitum amplius obtinebit: quia impossibile est hominem non percipere quod sancte credidit et speravit."—Quoted by Louis de Blois. De consol. pusillan. Cap. xxxix.

† Enchirid. cap. 114.

which our Lord gives them in the Holy Gospel of something "additional;" "All these things," He says, that is these temporal goods, "shall be added unto you." It is over and beyond the contract, so to speak, that God grants us these temporal blessings; and we ought to be so persuaded of this truth, as also of His fidelity in giving all those things which are necessary or useful to us, that while we ask them of Him with humble simplicity, we should, with regard to them, put ourselves completely in His Hand, without even the shadow of any disquiet.*

But in order that we may see this matter in the clearest light, it is not sufficient to know what we are to hope for, we must know also in Whom we should hope. Now, I have already told you this, but the present question which concerns us, is to see its practical consequences. He in Whom we are to place our hope, and, properly speaking, the only one, is God. "Hope aims at God," says the Angelic Doctor, in that the good we hope for, that is to say, glory and grace, can only come to us from Him and through Him.† You ought not, then, in this order to hope either in yourselves or in creatures.

And first, as to all that regards your salvation; as to the fruit of your good desires, or of your wise resolutions, as to the success of your efforts, as to your progress in sanctity, as to your perseverance in justice, do not count at all upon yourselves. Do not count either upon your natural qualities, or upon your gifts of grace, or upon your virtuous habits, or upon past triumphs you have

* To be convinced of these truths, we have only to read again the discourse of our Lord on the mountain, especially from the 25th verse to the 34th of the 6th ch. of St. Matt.

† Spes Deum attinget, in quantum speramus bonum quod a solo Deo et per solum Deum possibile est haberi.—2da 2dæ Quæst. xvii.

won, or upon so many proofs of love that you have doubtless already given to God. I do not wish assuredly to assert, that all this goes for nothing, or that you ought to forget these gifts and graces that you have received. Besides that, it is clearly your duty to call them to mind, in order to pay to God the sacred debt of your gratitude, this remembrance also may be of great and seasonable service in inspiring you with many motives which are most capable of giving you interior consolation and spiritual joy, and consequently of making you confide in God with more energy and fervour. But the great blessing which attends this remembrance of God's infinite goodness to you, is, precisely, that it makes you hope in Him more. It will be wise, however, to add to this sweet remembrance the reflection, which is as solid as it is salutary, that these gifts and graces, coming, as they do, from God, and therefore really and purely having a Divine character, borrow something also from yourself, inasmuch as they are in yourself; and, therefore, on this ground, they become frail, corruptible, and easily lost, and to such a degree, that God having given them to you, to save you, your constant weakness, and your malice, which is only dormant, may make them the occasion of scandal to you, and of spiritual loss. It is even what would happen inevitably, if God abandoned you to your own resources. Take care, therefore, lest vanity, mingling more or less with this act of your memory, should beget in your heart the least presumption; and, thus in corrupting the purity of your hope, self-love should secretly enervate and weaken its strength. Let there be no presumption before you act, no presumption in acting, and no interior exultation nor complacency in what you have done, after you have done it. As far as is possible,

separate self from your hope, and endeavour to place it in God alone, for no one can hope well, unless he is profoundly humble.

God alone is all your hope. Do not allege, then, beyond measure, your unworthiness, your miseries, your helplessness, nor draw from them any formal objection to His declared Will, nor make them the reason for entertaining any voluntary trouble in your mind. Ah! doubtless, if it is a question of employments, of honours, especially (for there are such even in religion) provided they are not imposed on you by obedience, you may well refuse them. Again, there is the way of doing this—for true humility never degenerates into cowardice—and still less does it hinder you from being simple—that is, from speaking candidly as you think. But when God has manifestly signified His Will, there is nothing left but to hope in Him, to abandon yourself to Him, to devote yourself to Him, in overcoming yourself, in forgetting, and, if it must be, in denying self. This is humility, and a humility often more true, and almost always more holy, than that which raises difficulties, suggests excuses, and declines onerous employments.* Yes, hope, then, in Him Who can do all things; and especially because this law, or rather this custom, always holds good, the custom, according to which God is pleased to prefer, in the accomplishment of His designs, instruments that are "weak," or even "contemptible" (1 Cor. i. 27), in order to reserve to Himself all the glory, and to remove more

* St. Vincent of Paul wrote to one of his priests who was alarmed at having the charge of a mission that had just been confided to him: "You feel inclined to evil! Believe me, God is incomparably more disposed to do good, and to do it even in you, and by you."—His Life, by Abelly, Book iii. ch. 3.

surely from His poor and dear creatures, whom He honours, the mortal danger of pride.

In the matter of Divine hope, do not count upon creatures. It is evident that, like you in this respect, they can do absolutely nothing of themselves. In principle, all depends on God; consequently, all things repose entirely on Him, and there is no one infallible but Himself. I do not mean to say that you should give way to that spirit, more melancholy than austere, which urges certain ill-advised Religious to proclaim themselves to be perfectly indifferent either to circumstances or to persons. Assuredly our human life is too sad for the religious life to be always very gay; but in order to render it intolerable it would be sufficient to find half-a-dozen persons who had this character—I was almost going to say, this malady. In all cases there is, in such a state of things, a manner of acting which is by far too disagreeable to one's neighbour for anyone to flatter himself that it is pleasing to our Lord. Such exaggerated sentiments as these are precisely to virtue what declamation is to eloquence. We need not be long in the company of these pretenders to detachment, nor probe them very deeply, to discover in them either a concealed pride, or a secret spite, or a rooted bitterness, nourished by a jealous and shameful susceptibility; in short, and to say all in one word, an inordinate love of self, concealing itself from sight under the mask of pretended virtue. Ah! this universal and almost disdainful distrust of creatures, this preconceived and harsh want of hope in all that is human, is, if I am not mistaken, still more removed from the spirit of the Holy Gospel, and from the grace of Jesus Christ, than the tendency would be to lean too much upon creatures, even to the degree of presumption. What is said by Jeremias?—"Cursed be the man that trusteth in man"

(Jerem. xvii. 5) is said by God, and therefore does not admit a shadow of contradiction. But we should not take this sentence of Holy Scripture in the right sense if we did not understand it of a confidence which omits all thought of God, which excludes Him, and therefore implies a practical denial of His almighty fidelity and a flagrant violation of the precept of hope. This is, besides, the commentary that God Himself gives to these fearful words, for having said, "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man," He takes care to add: "whose heart departeth from the Lord." St. Thomas says the truth, and therefore establishes the good rule: "It is certainly not permitted to hope in a man, or in any creature whatever, as if they were the first cause which could lead us to beatitude."* We may nevertheless put our hope in man, as a secondary agent, and an instrument able to help us to obtain the blessings which are co-ordained to our end, which is beatitude. It is in this principle that we found both the confidence we have in the Saints in heaven, and the prayers we address to them; but further, this should be understood also, in due proportion, of the Saints on earth, since, in a large measure, God dwells and operates in them, and with the evident design of inspiring, of influencing others, by their means. We may affirm the same truth, though always in diminished proportion, of the just, of simple Christians, and truly of every creature: for in all creatures, but most especially in man, there is yet—there is always in this world at least—something divine;

* Non licet sperare de aliquo homine vel de aliquâ creaturâ sicut de primâ causâ movente in beatitudinem: licet autem sperare de aliquo homine vel de aliquâ creaturâ sicut de agente secundario et instrumentali, per quod aliquis adjuvatur ad quæcumque bona consequenda in beatitudinem ordinata.—2da 2dæ Quæst. xviii., art. 4.

that is to say, something that is good, and beneficent, and stable; something, consequently, on which it is lawful, wise, and even requisite to count, whatever may be its value: and is it not to this precious stay and support, though imperfect and relative, that our good Master sends us all when He said: "Who is there among you, if, being a father, he is asked for bread, or a fish, or an egg, would he give his son a stone, a serpent, or a scorpion?" And see the Divine conclusion which He draws from this fact: "If ye, being evil, know how to give good things to your children, how much more shall your Father Who is in heaven give to those who ask Him His Holy Spirit," and the infinite blessing of which the Divine Spirit is the source and the pledge? (St. Luke xi. 12; St. Matt. vii. 11). Place your foot on the ladder—well and good—and mount up even to God; but who will venture to pretend that the ladder here offered us by Jesus Christ is a vain and deceitful help? Ah! poor human nature has defects enough; it is laden enough with miseries: do not arbitrarily and unjustly increase their number. Never be guilty of calumny, and, in the order of virtue, fear nothing so much as to be scant in your measure. Remain, then, wise in your confidence—you ought to be so everywhere; but always continue in confidence, and with discretion, but at the same time with simplicity, testify that you are so when there is need of it. If it were not, above all, an act of justice (justice towards God, since it is God Whom, after all, this confidence honours), it would be a great charity to your neighbour; for nothing expands the heart so much, nothing fills it so much with peace, nothing more favours the spirit of joy, nothing is so sure to produce that union which is the glory of God in monasteries, than this holy confidence. You may then know beforehand, that among your best

earthly supports, in which you place your confidence, you will find a hundred deficiencies, to which you may join a hundred disappointments. There is nothing more unreasonable, or truly more unjust, than to demand of a creature more than a creature can give. You will not be entirely rash if you expect some positive infidelity—alas! what life is exempt from it?—and who will venture (except by forgetting what he has been with regard to God, if not with regard to men) to be severe on others in this respect? However, believe me, do not let your mind dwell at all on these previous considerations: think of them only in a general way; and even when you do pay any attention to them, do not fail to plunge interiorly your weak heart into the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to derive from Christ, with that treasure of patient tranquillity so necessary for you, a treasure also of compassion, of indulgence, and of kindness, for the benefit of your neighbour. If the trouble, foreseen or unforeseen, comes upon you, be assured that it will bring with it its own grace, and therefore its own profit. Up to that point accept, kindly and simply, the supports that God gives you—supports of affection, supports of edification, supports of direction. Make use of them with great purity of intention, perfect liberty of heart, complete disinterestedness of will; verifying and confirming these holy dispositions by some voluntary sacrifices, but especially by a constant and cordial submission to all the sacrifices which the sweet Providence of God will send you. Keep yourselves thus always ready to bless God if He takes away from you your dear helps, as you blessed Him for giving you them; and honour Him by thinking, that if, under the stroke of a privation which yet you have accepted, loved, and adored, you shed some tears, His love, jealous as it is, will never make you any reproach.

Finally, what will enlighten your hope to the full is to maintain it always, and to exercise it uninterruptedly, in the observance of those conditions which God Himself has established, for He has established them. I omit those of which I shall have presently to speak to you, when describing the second quality your hope should have. But there is one which surpasses all the rest, and which this is the proper place to mention. The Gospel speaks of it everywhere, and everywhere it describes it as essential. This condition is that your hope (and consequently your prayer, and all your other acts which prayer inspires) should be founded expressly on Jesus Christ, and have its root in Him. Jesus Christ is, in fact, the whole reason of Christian Hope; and there is not, except His own, "any Name given to men whereby we may obtain salvation," and the graces which conduct us to it (Acts iv. 12). No one comes to the Father but by the Son (St. John xiv. 6) —it is an absolute law. He is "the Way," He is "the Gate"—the one only Way, and the one only Gate. He can always save us; but only if we pass by Him as the Way, because there is no one but Himself by Whom we can approach the Father (St. John x. 9). "By Me," He saith, "if any man enter in, he shall be saved." He will do whatever we demand of His Father, and the Father will act in concert with His Son, on the condition that we pray "in His Name;" and He will act thus in order that the Father may be glorified in the Son (St. John xiv. 13). And thus this condition is an order of things which is necessary and immutable. The Church knows this order, and teaches it, and makes it her constant rule. She never prays but through the illumination, by the movement and under the direction, of the Holy Spirit, nor does she ask anything of our Heavenly Father, but "through our Lord

Jesus Christ, His Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Him for ever and ever."

And understand what she means, by hoping or asking "in the Name of Jesus Christ." It is, doubtless, to present Jesus Christ to God as a title or ground; it is the ground of our hope, and it is of infinite value. It is also to lean upon Him, as upon a faithful Intercessor Who is always heard, as upon a devoted Advocate certain to gain all the causes for which He pleads. It is to present ourselves before God in His company, and sheltered by Him. But especially it is to carry this Name of Jesus in oneself; it is to possess rightfully this living name of Son of God which grace communicates to us, and which makes us enter into a real participation of the eternal filiation of the Word. It is to be filled with this filial Spirit, which proceeds in our souls from this generation of grace, and to cry to God, in virtue of this Holy Spirit, to cry in words, to cry from the heart, to cry in action and disposition: "Abba" (Father) (Rom. viii. 15). And as this is also lawful, and natural, and sweet to Christians, it is personally to Jesus that we address this prayer; it is also in His own Name—that is to say, by relying on His words, on His sufferings, on His merits, and on His titles, which He has conferred upon us; it is as His embers, quickened by His Holy Spirit, that we present our prayers to Him. And He Himself wishes that it should be so, telling us in His Gospel: "If you ask Me anything in My Name, I will do it" (St. John xiv. 14).

It is not that even they who have driven away from them the Holy Spirit by mortal sin, and thus destroyed charity in their souls, may not hope and pray: they have many reasons for doing so, and also many ways of doing it, and they are positively obliged to do it. But still,

Jesus is always their only hope; while they implore mercy, they ought to demand it in His Name, and that, if they invoke this Name with confidence, it will always be by the impulse of this indulgent and generous Spirit, Who does not cease, even to the end, to knock at doors which are closed against Him (1 Cor. xii. 3). Notwithstanding this, it is evident that in a soul in the state of grace, hope, having more grounds, has, without comparison, more power. Jesus, living, then, in us, becomes therein, so to speak, a Light to God Himself. He causes the Father to recognise what we are, to hear what we say, to listen with complacency to our desires, and to place, with the greatest liberality, His almighty power at our service. It is to this that our Lord refers in the consoling words of the Gospel: "He that abideth in Me and I in Him, the same beareth much fruit; for without Me, you can do nothing; if you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you" (St. John xv. 4—7).

We have said that, in the second place, hope ought to be laborious. Should it not be so when, in this world, even love itself is constrained to labour? He who speaks of virtue, speaks of power, but, in this world, of power which works and which overcomes difficulties. There are different kinds of power, that we may have within ourselves, as a kind of natural inheritance. They are to him who possesses them a sign of his own excellence, a majesty, a glory, and a joy, and that, even independently of any exercise which He may make them. Such in God, is His creative power, a power essential to His Being, and which is His from all eternity, although He only exercises it at will, and when it seems good to Him. I

think that in Paradise our virtues will have this character: they will be virtues consummated, powers acquired for ever, possessed without any weakness and without any contestation, sources of strength, which their perfection will render absolutely tranquil, and which will borrow something of the holy immutability of God. If they are an action, of which there can be no doubt, this action will flow naturally, and we cannot conceive even the shadow of an effort. Those Feet of the Son of Man that St. John saw in the Isle of Patmos, and which had the appearance of "fine brass" (Apoc. i. 13, 15), may well symbolise these powers, Divinely strengthened by glory. In fact, the gait of the Saints is royal; their steps are the steps of sovereigns; their feet resemble the base of a column, or rather of thrones. Whatever they may be, such is not the condition of the virtues of earth; and when it might be so for some, or even for all, hope would always remain laborious, even by its own nature. It is the reason why it lasts only for a time, and ends for us all with this earthly life. It is essentially a virtue which sighs, which lifts up its eyes, which stretches out its arms, which climbs, which strives. Labour is more than its law—it is its life.

We must labour in order to hope, we must labour to gain the blessings for which we hope.

And first, it is necessary to labour in order to hope, I mean, in order to preserve, to maintain, to cultivate, and to develop hope; to labour that it may produce the acts which it ought to produce, and in order that these acts themselves should be correct, opportune, and as perfect and as fruitful as possible. All this exacts a real labour, and supposes more than one victory. Every supernatural virtue is a gift which

God confides to our liberty, and, as the Gospel says, it is a talent which we must improve and trade with. I have told you, and none are ignorant of it, all may be lost that we have, and everything in us may suffer change and injury; for example, pride destroys all our virtue, and we suffer loss by negligence. Constancy—not to speak of progress, without which it is more imaginary than real—constancy, I say, already implies on our part a repeated, if not a continued, effort. Take care, then, of your hope. It has its roots in faith; the thoughts of faith are its sap and its strength: watch, that this sap may be abundant. Habitual meditation, the knowledge, more and more intimate and sweet, of the mystery of Jesus, will nourish and strengthen it more than anything else can possibly do. I do not speak of prayer, of the Sacraments, and of the general exercise of the virtue, for these means are essential. They are all intimately connected together; all co-operate; for there is no harmony like that of the Spiritual Life. Yet I cannot omit to recommend to you very particularly the spirit of mortification. Taken in the widest sense, mortification, in regard to hope, is a sure, powerful, and, I will say, indispensable means of culture; and the secret of this is contained in a remark I have already made—namely, that enjoyment is, alas! the born, and obstinate adversary of this heavenly virtue. By cutting off your feet, if I may be permitted to say so, mortification will oblige you to make use of your wings: rendering you less earthly, you will raise yourself up from the ground more quickly; it will enable you to fly more freely; you will wing your flight upward more easily; and these contain all the movements proper to hope.

Therefore cultivate within you this precious virtue, and since the development of the virtues depends especially

upon their exercise, and because their strength increases in exact proportion to the fruit they yield, apply yourselves to make frequent acts of hope in God. Make them when you pray, make them before you pray, make them before you act, make them while acting, make them in the hour of suffering—the hour which strikes so often on this earth, make them for their own sake, because it is a good thing in itself, and from which you may derive unspeakable profit. Make them in order to honour God, His unspeakable beauty, His unexampled goodness, His sovereign excellence, His infinite fidelity, His power, and His Providence. Make them that you may draw near to Him. Make these acts of hope in order to set free the Holy Spirit, Who is always, more or less, a prisoner in your soul, and to console Him in the sadness which, without willing it, you inflict on Him so often. Let your heart, like to that blessed one of whom the Psalmist speaks, "be always ready to hope in the Lord" (Ps. cxi. 7); and, in truth, it was in this hope that the blessedness of this man consisted; for this constant disposition to hope gave him so great a firmness, that he remained without any movement of fear until the last of his enemies was confounded and destroyed.

Labour, in the second place, to obtain the blessings promised to hope. It would be a strange and fatal delusion for us to regard Christianity as a substitution which God made to man for Himself, or for His own action instead of that of man. Nothing is more false, nothing is morally more untrue, nothing is more impossible. From whatever point of view we regard it, Christianity is but the perfection of humanity by means of God. We can only give perfection to what already exists. Far from dispensing with us, in condescending to live and

work in us, God establishes and strengthens us; far from absorbing, He develops us. No one is so truly man as the Christian, except Christ, Who is perfect Man, precisely because He is personally God Himself. Never forget this: when God gives us His graces, He gives us especially *the means to carry out what He wishes us to do.* Grace is an advance, and a Divine provocation, a new and superior principle of power and activity. The Holy Scripture describes it everywhere, under the names of germ and of seed. These words speak of things which, although they are inestimable on earth, by reason of the pre-eminent order to which they belong, are yet imperfect, or at least their condition is so. "It is by the grace of God," saith St. Paul, "I am what I am," but His "grace in me hath not been void; it has not been sterile, for I have laboured more abundantly than all the other Apostles; yet not I, but the grace of God with me" (1 Cor. xv. 10). Such is the law, such is the formula.

In the history of our salvation, God is the Bridegrom, the soul is the bride: either their union is unfruitful, or the fruit is common to both. "In the Lord," writes St. Paul—that is, in the mystery of Christ, in His history, in His doctrine, in His morality, in His sacraments, "neither is the man without the woman, nor the woman without the man" (1 Cor. xi. 11). Hence it is also that, throughout the Gospel, the kingdom of God, which signifies the entire Christian fact and work, is invariably represented to us under two aspects: one of sweetness, the other of strength; one of grace, the other of law; one of help, which precedes and which facilitates; the other of work, implying trouble and even struggle. "Labour as a good soldier of Christ," says St. Paul to St. Timothy (2 Tim. ii. 3). Heaven is at once a centre

which attracts us, and a steep ascent which we have to climb. It is, as the Apostle says, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost (Rom. xiv. 17), and at the same time, Jesus declares that we cannot gain it without violence (St. Matt. xi. 12). Whence, also, it is that glory, which clearly is but the outcome of grace, and which, as such, remains always, on the part of God, a fundamentally free gift* —glory, I say, is nevertheless called in the Holy Scriptures a salary, a reward, a crown; a salary which is paid for a work; a reward which recognises a service; a crown which adorns the brow of those who have fought and who have conquered.

We must, then, labour to obtain the blessings that are promised us. If we do not thus labour, our hope is altogether vain. You will receive, says the Gospel, but begin by asking. You will find, but first of all take care to seek. The gate will be opened to you, but first knock. Without running the risk of being bewildered by trying to penetrate the unfathomable mystery of your predestination, recall to mind and meditate on those practical words of St. Peter: "Wherefore," he says, "labour the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election" (2 Peter i. 10). We must well understand, and constantly repeat to ourselves, that in this matter all depends on God, and, at the same time,

* We know that we cannot merit, properly speaking, either the first grace, which is justification, or the last, which is final perseverance. "Munus perseverantiæ," says the Council of Trent; "aliunde haberi non potest, nisi ab eo qui potens est eum qui stat statuere ut perseveranter stet, et eum qui cadit restituere: nemo sibi certè aliquid absolutâ certitudine polliceatur; tametsi in Dei auxilio firmissimam spem collacare et reponere omnes debent: Deus enim, nisi illius gratiæ defuerint, sicut cœpit opus bonum, ita perficiet, operans velle et perficere."—Sess. vi. cap. 13.

we must act as if all depended only on ourselves. The phrase, "Help yourself, and God will help you," has been singularly misapplied. With many it is nothing else but a formal denial of grace. Therefore, in certain respects, they speak more correctly who say, "God will help you; do your best." Yet these words have a Catholic sense; for if, in our supernatural, and even in our natural actions, God always begins, and must indispensably begin all, the truth is that He never finishes anything in us, or by us, except we yield ourselves voluntarily to His action, and second it by our concurrence. Hope in God, saith the Psalmist, hope in Him, because without Him you can do nothing. Hope in Him, because He is always there, going before you, moving you, sustaining you, directing you. Do, then, what good you can—at least, the good that God commands you, and in which you are sure to be assisted by Him; and then you shall dwell in the land, the land of the just, of the Saints, of the Blessed; and even before your death, but especially after your passage out of life, you shall be "fed with His unspeakable delights" (Ps. xxxvi. 3).

What, then, God demands of you is, first, to remove the obstacles, and afterwards to employ the means.

We often hear the lamentation, especially in religion, of the little progress that is made in virtue, and the visible failure of prayers which have not been wanting either in sincerity or fervour, and we fail to see, that self, and self alone, is the one obstacle to the entire possession of all the graces we ask for.

For example, we ask the full pardon of our faults, and we nourish against a neighbour some secret rancour. A Religious begs of God the grace to love Him with her whole soul, and she remains cold and reserved towards

her sisters. We besiege the crucifix to obtain a little humility and meekness, and we have not the courage to repress our impatience or to humble our self-love. Then see what happens! God hears the desire, and even accepts the prayer: grace goes forth from the Sacred Heart of our Divine Lord; for every Christian prayer has the power to open His Heart; but instead of finding our heart empty, so that the healing and beneficent waters of His grace may flow into it, it finds there an obstruction, and these waters break against it, as a wave against a rock. All hope is ill-regulated and rash which flatters itself to extort from God any concession whatsoever, which gives the least umbrage to His veracity, to His justice, to His wisdom, to His sanctity. Purify, then, your soul, at least, by a serious repentance, and a sincere and actual desire to give glory to God, by corresponding with the grace you solicit. Keep free and open the avenues of your soul: clean and empty the vessel into which you wish that God should rain down His manna; and then, be assured, that, more or less promptly and abundantly, the manna will descend. Remember, besides, that in the high and delicate relations which, by your state as Religious, you hold with God, causes, which seem to be slight and small in themselves, may have grave consequences, may cancel important graces, and may hinder great designs. It must be, doubtless, a considerable noise which hinders a cry reaching the ear; but the slightest sound is sufficient to prevent our hearing a breath or whisper passing through the air. Now, usually, the graces that God gives you, whatever may be otherwise their nature and their aim, resemble much less a cry than a whisper. God condescends sometimes to cry in the ears of sinners; but with His intimate friends,

His custom and inclination is to speak in a low tone; and I have no need to remind you, that, especially in the order of the affections (and such is the order of the relations God has with souls), what is said in this whisper, is worth infinitely more than what is said aloud.

Remove the obstacles, but make use of the means. Watch, be fervent; live as the servant in the Gospel, with the loins girt, the feet shod, the arms ready and nimble (St. Luke xii. 37). Be like to him who said, "Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect; but I follow after, if I may by any means apprehend wherein I am also apprehended by Jesus Christ. I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do: forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark, to the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus" (Philipp. iii. 12, 13, 14). After the example of the Apostle, do not so fight as one beating the air, and do "not run as at an uncertainty" (1 Cor. ix. 26). Observe faithfully, constantly, perfectly, your rule, which is for you, here as everywhere, the mean of means. Profit with zeal by so many spiritual helps, with which your Holy Rule provides. Make everything turn to your good, gathering at each step whatever flowers you meet with in your path—a flower of progress, some virtue practised, some grace increased, some fresh degree of glory merited. Be courageous, be generous, always thinking that you "can do all things in Jesus, Who dwells in you, and is always your strength" (Philipp. iv. 13). Warm yourselves at the fire of His doctrines, inebriate yourselves with the wine of His sufferings, take and eat the holy provision He Himself has prepared for your journey through life. Every morning take up your cross, which is His cross;

be very firm in your resolution to carry it for Him till the evening, and to take it up again the next day, and to carry it thus with Him even till death, having learnt of Him that he only will be saved who perseveres unto the end, that is, unto death (St. Matt. xxiv. 13). What will not your hope, backed and supported by such labour—what will it not venture to ask, what will it not merit, what will it not obtain?

It is true that you will never feel yourself authorised by this hope to present yourself before God with the air of a creditor. Such a disposition He detests; He reproaches those who act thus; and you would yourselves abhor such conduct.*

You will approach Him, nevertheless, with simplicity, with assurance, with an open and joyful heart. You will say to Him, with David, "O Master! O Father! see how sincerely I have loved Your precepts; quicken me, then, now in Your mercy" (Ps. cxviii. 159). And you will judge then, by Your own experience, if the royal Prophet was not divinely inspired when he sang: "Then shall I not be confounded, when I shall look into all Thy commandments," when I shall set my eyes on them to consider them, my heart to love them, and my will to practise them (Ps. cxviii. 6).

Finally (and you will bear it often in mind), the last quality of hope is, that it should be invincible. This sup-

* See how God addresses such: "For they seek Me from day to day, and desire to know My ways, as a nation that hath done justice, and hath not forsaken the judgment of their God; they ask of Me the judgments of justice: they are willing to approach to God. Why have we fasted, and Thou hast not regarded: have humbled ourselves, and Thou hast not taken notice? Behold, in the day of your fast your own will is found, and you exact of all your debtors."—Isaias lviii. 2, 3.

poses that it will always be victorious, and, first, that it is attacked. Everything here below is liable to be attacked. Our life on earth is but a combat (Job. vii. 1). We are either vanquishers, or vanquished; but no one has the secret of withdrawing himself from this combat. Now, I venture to say that on this vast field of battle, which we call the Christian life, there is no corner of ground where the struggle is more violent and more deadly, than on that of hope. We comprehend how it should be so when we consider attentively that it is on this ground of hope, that the whole affair of our salvation is decided. To be saved, it is well, indeed, to believe in God, and to love Him; but it is by means of hope, that the faith blossoms into love. Without hope, our spiritual tree is but a root without a branch, and therefore without fruit. Also, for one temptation that we have against faith, we have ten or twenty against hope. There are hardly any sins as to which we can be more easily deceived than those which are contrary to hope. We fall into them in so many ways, and much oftener than we think, and much more frequently, therefore, than we accuse ourselves of falling into them. The sad legion of those sins—sins hidden and unknown—from which David conjured God to purify his soul (Ps. lxviii. 13), receives from our offences against hope an enormous contingent. Certainly Satan knows well what he is doing when he subjects us, on this point, to such furious assaults; for if, in the depths of a heart which reposes itself habitually on God, he succeeds in injecting, and especially in maintaining, a leaven of distrust, he easily gains the rest. And then, St. Paul says, with this poor heart he does almost whatever he wishes,* which is

* The spirit that worketh in the children "of unbelief" (Ephes. ii. 2). In the Vulgate, "diffidentiæ," that is, "of distrust."

something dreadful. Is it because he himself is for ever a stranger to hope, that he is so enraged whenever he sees it? Is it not rather because hope contains our salvation in its germ? and, therefore, to destroy it in any soul is, for his impiety and his malice, a joy analagous to that which he would have felt in strangling Jesus in His cradle. Certain it is that he has nothing so much at heart, as to destroy hope. And to attain this end, every means is good for him to use. It is thus that he strives to transfigure himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. xi. 14). He makes use against you of all the Divine perfections. In the name of sanctity, in the name even of love, he will do his best; he will make every effort to convince you that, after having undervalued and lost so many graces, discouragement is only a reasonable compliance with truth; and that, in giving way to despondency and despair, you are only recognising and honouring the eternal justice. He will quote the Scripture; he will call to your mind some characteristic or some saying of a Saint, or some passage from an ascetic which for many years you have not once thought of; he will falsify the sense, but with so much impudence and ability, that his interpretation will seem to you the pure doctrine of the Gospel, and a judgment pronounced beforehand against you. Unmask this angel of darkness; tell him that he lies, and that he is nothing else but wholly a liar. Close your eyes to his phantoms; turn a deaf ear to his proposals, especially if he engages you in theological discussions; and, in general, dread no devils so much as theological devils. Do not reason with them at all, I pray you. Do not admit that where hope in God is concerned, there can be any question for you. Hope, and hope again, and hope always; and beware of your inclinations and dangerous propensities, for it is there

principally that our enemy lays his snares. By dangerous propensities I mean the abuse of the examination of conscience, and the mania of looking back too much on yourself and on your conduct. I mean also considerations which are imprudent; that is to say, which are not approved by your Director, or which are prolonged beyond measure—considerations, I mean, on those truths of faith that are terrifying—such as sin, death, judgment, and the eternity of hell. By dangerous inclinations I also mean an habitual disquiet of mind, which is voluntary and consented to; a scrupulous disposition, an unresisted melancholy. Discouragement after faults, the delay of Confession, the systematic and obstinate withdrawal from the Holy Table. I repeat it: distrust these propensities; do not dwell upon them. They lead to abysses whence only a miracle can withdraw those who fall into them.

If you had greviously sinned—alas! even in religion this is possible—if you alone had committed all the sins of all mankind, do penance for them certainly. Do great penance, but let it be a penance full of hope, remembering that it is an error against faith to believe that a sinner, whoever he may be, if he is still living upon earth, is beyond the possibility of conversion: and never forget that, if Judas is lost, it is not for having sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, but for having despaired of the Divine mercy.

Besides, the demon has so much the more strength in his war against our hope, as he has the outer world and the present life for accomplices—involuntary accomplices, and, therefore, innocent yet real accomplices. He is, moreover, certain to find beforehand in us all, the echo of nature to his proposals. Our life is called by the Scripture "a temptation," only because it helps to seduce

us, and, consequently, to captivate our heart and to keep it, to the prejudice of Almighty God. The Jews said to John the Baptist: "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" (St. Matt. xi. 3.) It is the question which human nature instinctively puts to all the different kinds of happiness on this earth. And though since the Fall (and we ought to thank God for it) great and many miseries are intermingled with our joy, yet we should admit that we may taste, even in this world, joys which are true and delicious. Now, to each of these joys which present themselves to us, instinct says: "Art thou the felicity we are in search of, or are we to look for another? Art thou the dawn of another day, or the mid-day, in the brightness of which my life is to find its blossom and its fruit?" John the Baptist replied to the Jews: "I am but the forerunner, a precursor, a prophet, a voice, a testimony; and He to Whom I bear witness existed a long while before myself. I announce Him, and I precede Him; but it is He Who created me, and Who sent me;" "the latchet of Whose shoes I am not worthy to loose" (St. John i. 27). It is in the same sense that grace answers to instinct, whenever it is interrogated with regard to the pleasures of this life, in reference to our supreme happiness. It says, that these pleasures are weak signs of the goodness of God: they are shadows, and at most but preludes, of our true happiness; but that they are not this true happiness itself; that they enable us to foresee it, but do not give it; that true joy is further off, and higher; that it will not come to us till after our death; that till then we must wait for it, and, while waiting for it, we must merit it. For it is a happiness as worthy, as it is complete; a happiness that would not exist, if it were not a state of glory;

and, besides, it is such "as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive" (1 Cor. ii. 9). But how strong is the voice of nature within us in this respect! how moving! how eloquent! The more so, because, as I have told you, the demon dwells in this nature of ours, makes the most of its weak side, and swells its voice. He is full of cunning and malice. He will suddenly produce in our imagination, as it were, a fantastic combination of earthly felicity, elevated, though sensible; lawful up to a certain point—lawful, at least, for certain persons, and on certain conditions; possible assuredly, and even, he insinuates, so near, that if we are willing we may enjoy it on the spot, and without much difficulty. Very often, in order to make this delusion appear more brilliant to the eyes of the soul, he will choose the time when we are exhausted, harassed, perplexed, or when we are combating and struggling with ourselves, and with all that is about us; or when we are walking in the path of virtue, which seems to us then to be but a sandy, burning, monotonous, and boundless desert; or when prayer is a burden, the Religious Life wholly a weariness; when there is no desire for the Sacraments, and no consolation in their use, though they may have been received with piety and with profit, but a profit that is hidden, and of which the receiver is not conscious. These are terrible phases to pass through, but which hope may, and ought to, traverse with impunity, with tranquillity, and triumphantly. The Holy Scriptures are a fortress where are stored up "a thousand bucklers," as sings the Canticle of Canticles; shields, holy and impenetrable, "wherewith all the fiery darts of the most wicked one are extinguished" (Ephes. vi. 16). Make use of this

holy arsenal, and put on your Divine armour for these noble combats. Say with Solomon: "Laughter I counted error, and to mirth I said, Why art thou vainly deceived?" (Eccle. ii. 2). Say with David: "The wicked have told me fables, but not as Thy law" (Ps. cxviii. 85). "Thy Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths" (Ps. cxviii. 105)—it is the only light I wish for my paths—"I have sworn, and am determined to keep the judgments of Thy justice;" and I will not break my oath. "For what have I in heaven? and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth?" (Ps. lxxii. 25.) "But the things that were gain to me, the same I have counted loss for Christ." "Furthermore, I count all things but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ" (Philipp. iii. 7). No; I am not anxious for consolation. I find it better, and more just, and more sweet, not to be consoled in a place where my Master relished only suffering. Then, O my God! not joy, but justice and sanctity! Later on! joy, later on! when I shall be where You are, in the country where joys never end,—I mean, not "to be satisfied till Your glory shall appear" (Ps. xvi. 15).

Patience, then, in this matter, is wholly indispensable; for this work, of which faith is the beginning, and of which hope waits for the end, is sublime and difficult, and, for that very reason, very long. Our entire being (and it is vast), in all its depths (and there is no one but God Who can fathom it), all our entire being is its seat and its subject. Further, the Great Workman Who labours at it, has designs too transcendent, for His ways not to be often a real enigma. I say this of the designs which regard the most insignificant member of the Divine Family, but how much truer is it of more

elevated predestinations—such as those of Bishops, of Priests, of religious men and women? God Himself, then, interposes here. He not only permits the soul to be tried; He tries it Himself, and gives, to hope especially, an exercise in which, without His own powerful grace, all human strength would succumb. Our hope causes Him so much joy, it seems, and a joy so exquisite, that He often does not cease to ask it of us till we have given Him enough of it to enebriate Him with delight. We see Him also sometimes push matters to extremity, pressing souls beyond measure, and exacting nothing less than the holocaust of our senses, and of our human heart. We have an illustrious example of this in the history of Abraham. God rarely goes to this excess; but it is usual for Him to try us; and as the Archangel Raphael said to Tobias, the more dear we are to Him, the more He has given us, the more He expects of us, (Tob. xii. 13), the longer the trial lasts, the heavier and the more difficult it becomes. The trial is often of the strangest character. For example, God shows us an object to gain, and forthwith He seems to oblige us to turn our backs upon it. He opens for us a path, and at the very first step we take in it, it closes in upon us, or we lose it. Everything indicates that He Himself has appointed a day to be with us, and precisely on that day He is absent. He commands us to undertake some enterprise, while at the same moment He takes from us all the means on which we depend for its success. We might say that in all that He does, as in the work of His creation, it is a necessity for Him to set out from nothing. He keeps to this manner of procedure, and appears to make it a sort of point of honour. How many times, even, He assumes the appearance of one who contra-

dicts Himself, who retraces his steps, and alters his mind, in a way no reasonable man would act among ourselves.

O inscrutable wisdom! playing in all the world (Prov. viii. 30), but nowhere as among the children of men, in whom Thou dost deign, Thou sayest, to take Thy chief delight. Who will relate these devices of Thine? expedients so full of wisdom, so holy and full of benevolence, even when they make us tremble! Who will explain Thy ways? who shall have the knowledge of them, and reveal their secrets? To yield up self to these Divine projects with a simple abandonment, and always meet them with a smile? to follow Thee with adorations, in ways the most unforeseen, the most sad, the most perilous,—we may do it, and we ought to do it; but we never shall do it but by the victorious strength of Thy Holy Spirit, the source and substance in us of holy hope. As heretofore, Thy angel wrestled with Jacob; Thou dost wrestle truly with us, hand to hand (Gen. xxxii. 24). But even here, O my God! here especially, we ought to be invincible. And how shall we be so? We have but one resource, but it is infallible: to oppose God to God, His perfections to His acts, the word of His lips to the work of His hands, the needs of His mercy to the demands of His justice—in a word, His immense and unchanging love, to all that His sanctity wishes that we should suffer from Him, or for Him. David was in these dispositions when He sang: "Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me" (Ps. xxii. 4); and Job also, when he exclaimed: "Though He should kill me, I will trust in Him" (Job. xiii. 15). This is what St. Paul calls "hoping against hope"

(Rom. iv. 18). Hope even to this point. Nothing so much strengthens this virtue, which then strengthens all the rest, as that which is naturally a scandal to it; and it often owes its perfection in us to some supreme trial, in which there was a risk of its perishing altogether. St. Paul gives this instruction to the Romans, when he writes to them, saying, "We glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God; and not only so, but we glory also in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience trial, and trial hope, and hope confoundeth not" (Rom. v. 2).

If you follow the path we have traced; if you do not cease to lean upon God, on His character, on His promises, on so many pledges He has given you; if your hope is also enlightened, laborious, invincible, the result will be that your soul will rest in a state of security and expansion, which will become the proper character of your interior life. Your hope will deepen into confidence, and this confidence will itself become the root, the rule, and, as it were, the soul, of all your relations with God. You will no longer be affected as if you had to live under the government of a master who was severe, restless, troublesome, and difficult to please. You will no longer walk in sadness, but always with that serene joy which is not, it is true, that of our heavenly country, but which is the habitual and normal sentiment of those who proceed in their journey thither, under the sweet and sure conduct of Jesus. All that God will do, or permit to happen, you will take in good part; you will "always think of Him in goodness" (Wisd. i. 1), according to the direction of the Wise Man; and, never speaking evil of the present, you will not pre-judge the future, and especially you will

have no distrust of it. St. Paul has described this state, in saying of charity that it "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor. xiii. 7). Ah! confidence! it is much more than hope; it is the Divine fruit of a hope that is old, and a thousand times justified. It is the inestimable experience of God, and the profound, affectionate, and practical certainty of His fidelity, of His goodness, and of His exhaustless tenderness. It is the ever-present sentiment of His Paternity, and the most perfect worship we can render Him.* It is the flower of true piety, and the perfume of grace. The soul which is full of confidence in God gives to Him a harvest which pays Him for all His labours. He takes His repose in it, as the vintager in the midst of his vineyard, after he has gathered its grapes. God is pleased with this soul, for He can now give her the pleasure He wishes. He is so sure of us, when we are perfectly sure of Him! For then all is reciprocal, and there is nothing like confidence to establish perfect sympathy between the soul and God. A true confidence in God suffices to make a Saint; for the sanctity of a creature, is the fulness of the reign of God in it. Now, confidence attracts God into His creature; it obliges Him to dwell in it, and, in abandoning itself to Him without reserve, and without measure, God becomes its Sovereign, and fills it with His grace. In short, the soul which possesses this Christian confidence in God, shares in all that is most profound in the filial relation that Jesus holds to His Heavenly

* In his beautiful book of Spiritual Conferences, F. Faber has written on this subject some pages full of truth, and of exquisite delicacy, and beauty. See the conference called, "No true adoration without confidence."

Father. It enters more and more into the intimate and unspeakable communications of Jesus with His Father, and of the Father with Jesus; which, if we consider only the interior life that results from it, is worth more to us than a re-installation into the earthly paradise.

ON HUMILITY.

THE man who is enlightened by faith knows his last end. He knows, and with a knowledge divinely certain, that God loves him, calls him, and awaits him; that He loves him even so much as to wish that he should share with Him His own personal life; that He calls him to His own glory; that He awaits him to share with Him His own joy. He knows that, in this world, God gives him this heavenly life in its germ; that life which, poured forth at first, in all its fulness, in Jesus, the Chief of the chosen race, and Head also of the Church, is afterwards bestowed on all those who receive the testimony of Christ and accept His law. He knows, in fine, that once enriched with this first and principal gift, and on the sole condition of remaining faithful to it, by fearing God as he ought, he may, and he should, hope for every grace, avoid every sin, acquire every virtue, fulfil all justice, and thus, realising his vocation on earth, accomplish the destiny, in view of which God has created him.

But here a question necessarily presents itself. There is no one who does not put it to himself, at least implicitly. It suggests itself, and from the instant when, our reason being formed, conscience awakes; this question regards the starting-point.

The starting-point is the state of mankind according

to nature. You have seen it already. Considered simply in itself, nature is the work of God, and therefore it is good. This is true of every nature that has been created; it is particularly true of our own. Our nature has, then, the right to live, and all the other rights which spring from it. It is worthy of respect, it commands love; so much the more, as that, to whatever height God thinks fit to raise up the edifice of our moral life, nature remains its indispensable foundation. Without it, grace has nowhere to place herself, still less what to take hold of; and glory becomes impossible.

Such, then, is our nature's right. In fact, this nature is greatly depreciated. It is not depreciated in its essence; evil does not affect the essences of things: it is only depreciated in its condition. Doubtless we cannot pretend that God could not create it in the state in which it is;* but in reality He did create it, in a state far different from that in which it actually is, and in all respects far superior to it. So that our present condition is a fall, and, therefore, an evil. The evil is truly in us: contrary to our nature, as all evil necessarily is; and yet it has entered into our nature, in this sense that it begins to exist in us even while we are in the womb of our mother, and that it never quits us till we descend into the tomb. For we are not now speaking only of original sin: everyone knows that this is effaced by Baptism. We are speaking, further and especially, of that which Baptism does not efface —the triple concupiscence which is the daughter, and at the same time the mother, of sin; of that evil in us which is living, active, and obstinate; which we can keep under

* The Holy See has condemned the 55th proposition of Mich. Baius, which is thus expressed: "Deus non potuisset ab initio talem creare hominem qualis nunc nascitur."

and lessen, but which we cannot, here on earth, completely destroy. This evil is in us: this evil, is, alas! ourselves. As the soul, with its intelligence and free will, is man, so concupiscence, with its low instincts and impure desires, is man also. So much so, that in each of us there are truly two men—the inferior and the superior, the carnal and the spiritual man; the fruit and image of the earthly Adam, and the fruit and image of the Heavenly Adam; in a word, according to the profound language of the Sacred Scriptures, the old man and the new man.

Such, in reality, is our natural state. In the order of morality, it is from this truth that we set out: it is always our starting-point. We cannot have the least moral relation with God, do any act that He can accept or simply regard; we cannot make one single step in the way which leads to our end, without taking one's side in regard to this fundamental state—that is to say, with regard to ourselves. This question, then, necessarily concerns our own personality: to say the truth, it is the only question as to our existence here; for all our relations with creatures, all that we can give them of our attention or affection, all that, in exchange, they can give us of joy and of service —all has its root and its reason in our heart. All starts from there, all returns there, all is seated there, all the struggle is there. There all is decided. We are, then, always and necessarily, the *only* parties engaged in the cause. Further, it is not only in the commencement that this cause opens in us a suit and claims a judgment: it presents itself again at every step in our path; it is the necessary preamble, the inevitable condition, of each of our acts. The part taken to-day will not suffice for to-morrow; to-morrow we must resume it again, and still

resume it again after man; and it will be thus even to our last sigh.

Then, seeing what we are, knowing and feeling what is our actual state, what are we to think of ourselves? How are we to judge, and especially how are we to treat, ourselves? What is the true reason, whether in theory or practice, that man bears to himself? This, then, is what we call the question, we might call it the problem, of our starting-point.

Evidently, from the time man knows his last end, he is no longer ignorant of the law of his life. He is in the way to direct his movements, and to regulate all his conduct. However, it would seem fitting that a clear light should be thrown, and that a special word should be spoken on the delicate relation that man bears to himself. Left to our own resources, we should not have had this light, or, at least, we should not have so regarded it as to see it in a way useful to ourselves: and if we had found this word, we should not have had the strength to say it, and especially to apply it to ourselves. We find ourselves engrossed by interests which are at once too numerous and too powerful. A judge, deeply interested in a cause in which he is to pronounce judgment, ceases to be in a right position, and, in order to be wholly impartial, he must be either a hero or a saint. This is too much to ask, considering our weakness.

In this, as in everything else, God has mercifully helped us. He Himself has caused this light to shine; He Himself has spoken this word: He has created the one in speaking the other; and this luminous saying is that which we read in the Gospel: "If anyone will come *after Me*, let him renounce himself, or rather let him *deny himself*" (*St. Matt. xvi. 24*).

Abnegation, then, is the Divine solution of this complex problem, which is always rising up before us in our relations with ourselves. Apparently it is a strange duty. How may we, why must we, deny ourselves? Does it not seem more true, more just, and better to assert our own will than to deny it? God Himself affirms to all His own existence: "I am Who Am" (Exod. iii. 14). Before even He thus affirms His own existence to His exterior creation, He affirms it within. This interior affirmation, you have already guessed it, is the generation of His Word; and you know that this act is attached to the Essence of His life, that it is a natural necessity of His Being. To engender the Word, or to exist for God, is all one. If God affirms Himself, why ought the creature to deny itself? for its law is to imitate God (Ephes. i. 5), to resemble Him in all things, and always to be perfect, even as His Heavenly Father is perfect (St. Matt. v. 48).

We should reason of this affirmation of self as of the love of self; for we can only love what we affirm—that is to say, what is and what we know to exist. Our nature instinctively tells us this, and the Gospel promulgates it: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (St. Matt. xxii. 39); and together with this there is a precept, as formally laid down, to hate oneself. Nature, if we listen to it attentively, indicates it indeed to us; but so obscurely, and so timidly, that, without the express declaration of the Gospel, it would amount practically to nothing. "If any man come to Me," said Jesus, "and hate not his own life, he cannot be My disciple" (St. Luke xiv. 26). But to what degree are we to hate this life of ours? "Even to lose it, and it is the only means to save it" (St. Matt. xvi. 26). Is this contradictory? No; for this very simple reason, that there is within us something that

we must love, and something also that we must hate. Now, this part in us that we must love we should affirm; and that other part in us that we must hate we should renounce, reject, and deny.

In brief, that in us which we should love and affirm, is that which God Himself affirms and loves; and that in us which we ought, on the contrary, to hate and to deny, is that in us which He detests and condemns.

What is that in us which God affirms and loves? That which He has put within us, and wishes to put there—our natural being, such as it came forth from His Hands; and our being of grace, such as it sprang forth from His Heart—His work and His gift; that in which we are like to Him, and are united to Him; our primitive and heavenly ideal—in a word, the truth of our being, its beauty, its justice, its goodness, its fecundity, its happiness. This is what we should affirm and love: never shall we be too energetic in this affirmation, never too passionate in this love.

But what is that in us which God detests and denies? Precisely that which denies and gives the lie to Himself—that frightful and continual and obstinate No! which, echo as it is, more or less distant, of the first No! hurled by Lucifer in the face of the Most High, is always rumbling in the lowest part of our soul; and, if it is not violently and constantly stifled there, will be sure to break out in open revolt. That which God denies in us is that blind and perverse power which strives to ruin His designs, to contradict His instructions, to disregard His rights, to calumniate His perfections, to violate His precepts, to repel His gifts, to struggle against His love, and to drive away from us His Holy Spirit. What in us God detests and denies is, then, positively what deceives, per-

verts, and depraves us; what kills, what destroys us, both in this world and in the next. This is what God denies, and which, under pain of being altogether denied by Him at the last day, we ought to deny with Him, and as He desires it to be denied; to deny theoretically, practically, inexorably.

Does God err in His loves and in His hatreds? And when He tells us to have the same loves and the same hatreds as Himself, does He oppress us? does He betray us? The pride of unbelievers asserts it. Among all the principles of evangelical morality, there is not a single one which so rouses and scandalises the pride of our nature as this, which, besides, is a sort of root of other scandals also. Alas! it must be so. The law of abnegation supposes the fall of man and the schism it produces in us. Before the sin of Adam, there was indeed something in man which he had to love less and to keep in subordination; but there was nothing for him to hate, and nothing in himself that he should deny. Now, though historically nothing is better proved than this fall of our first parent, and though its traces in us can be clearly seen by all who reflect on themselves, yet it is a truth which our natural pride refuses absolutely to hold and to understand. But for true Christians—that is to say, for those who have kept the faith of their Baptism—what is more just and more simple than this law of renouncement? Is it not the cry of the sanctity of God, of His wisdom, of His goodness, of all His perfections, and especially of His unspeakable love for us? Is it not the formula of our liberation, the guarantee of our dignity, the safeguard of our peace, the secret of our perfection, and the indispensable condition of our beatitude?

"We renounce ourselves," says St. Hilary, "when we

strive to hate what we have been, and begin to love what we ought to be; that is to say," he continues, "we deny ourselves as often as when, stripping ourselves of our old outward clothing, we put on that fresh and green youth which is the proper state of the new man, and the exclusive privilege of the servants of God."*

Origen made a still better remark, when he said that all renouncement consisted in rejecting, repudiating, and denying whatever is sin in us; that is to say, what is a lie, what is evil in us, and our own nothingness, in order to affirm in us, to attest in us, the Christ; to know that true, living, holy, heavenly, and eternal Being† Who, subsisting at first in God, descends towards us by revelation, enters into us by faith, remains there by love, and wishes so to live in us, that each may say with St. Paul, "To me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philipp. i. 21). "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20).

The light once thrown on this subject, it would seem logical and opportune to begin at once the study of the three virtues, whose property is to subdue these three concupiscences, in which consists the whole life of the old man, and in which, also, are contained all that the

* Abnegamus nos cum studemus odisse quod fuimus, et amare incipimus quod esse debemus. Ergo toties nos negamus, quoties ad meliora convertimus, quoties exteriori vetustate depositâ, in Domini servitute novi hominis alacritate juvenescimus.—S. Hilar. de Trinit.

† Omne colloquium nostrum et cogitatio, omnis sermo et actio ita fiat, ut nobis quidem ipsi renuntiemus: Christum autem et in Christo testemur. Sic enim persuasum habeo omne hominis perfecti opus Christum testari; et omnis peccati abstinentiam esse suî ipsius renuntiationem quæ post Christum deducat.—Origen. Comment. in Matth. tom. xii. No. 24.

Christian ought to deny in himself: poverty as opposed to the concupiscence of the eyes—that is to say, above all, to the love of luxury and riches; chastity opposed to the concupiscence of the flesh, and obedience opposed to the pride of life, whose first and necessary effect is the love of independence, the spirit of insubordination and revolt, the propriety of oneself, and that terrible and obstinate passion which ascetics call self-love. In fact, in the same way as the tree sends forth its fruit by its branches, so also abnegation performs its acts, and brings forth its works by the means of these three virtues.

But because these virtues are precisely the matter of the three vows of religion, we prefer to delay our study of them, and occupy ourselves, by way of prelude, with those two cardinal virtues which, having also a relation to this question of our starting-point, are, for the same reason, some of the effects and the exercises of holy renouncement.

The first of these two virtues is humility; mortification is the second. Like faith, the fear of God, and hope, these two virtues are binding on all Christians, whatever may be their state of life. Both are the essential and general manifestations of sanctifying grace; both are the indispensable foundation of Christian perfection and sanctity. So necessary are they to Religious, that, without them, neither poverty, nor chastity, nor obedience would have any truth, sincerity, or efficacy against the triple concupiscence, nor, consequently, would they have any supernatural merit, or any value in the sight of God.

The first of these two virtues, humility, is of special service to man, and enables him to pass upon himself a suitable judgment, and, therefore, it lays down the foundation of the treatment to which he ought, as a rule, to

be subject in this world. The second, mortification, gives us the light and the courage to follow this treatment, whether imposed on us by ourselves or by other causes, which our will obliges us to obey. We will speak, first, of humility, and we shall divide into two parts what we think it would be useful to tell you of this heavenly virtue. The first part will contain principles and explanations; the second, directions and counsels. The first, then, will give you the knowledge of this virtue. The object of the second will be to give you rules for reducing it into practice. Both the one and the other, will have the effect, I trust—and I ask it of God—of inspiring you with the love of humility, without which love, both your knowledge of this virtue will continue imperfect, and your practice of it will neither be fruitful, nor persevering.

I.

Humility is a virtue which, under the influence of the light in which God reveals to His creatures what He is, and what they are, disposes them to abase themselves.

If there exists here on earth a doctrine which elevates man, it is Christianity. Raising us first from the state of sin in which it always finds us, it elevates us above the world and the present life; and it does not allow us either to stand still or to repose, until we have reached the summit of all things, that is to say, the bosom of our Heavenly Father. In reality, Christianity is only the dogma, the law, and the fact of the deification of the creature. Now, what room is there for abasement here? First, how can abasement ever become a praiseworthy thing?* On what ground is it good to acquire the taste

* Humilitas in suâ ratione importat laudabilem dejectionem in ima.—S. Thom. Summa. 2da 2dæ, Quæst. clxi., art. 1, ad 2.

for it, and to contract the habit of it? How, especially, can it be for Christians the matter of a precept, or even of a counsel? Humility, as the name indicates, is something which casts down to the ground.* What has a being to do with the ground, in whom the universal cry of his nature is to mount up to heaven? And yet it is manifest that, in this same Gospel code which, under pain of reprobation, obliges man to mount even to God, humility is set forth everywhere as a virtue, and imposed upon all as a law which admits of no dispensation. This law is even so essential that, if it is not observed, it is of little or of no use to observe all the rest; and so necessary does this virtue appear, that where there is no humility, we declare that there is no true virtue whatever. If we read the Holy Scriptures, if we follow the tradition of the Doctors and Saints, humility is there constantly shown to be the absolute condition of grace,† as the treasure-house of the gifts of God,‡ and as the very atmosphere of all the supernatural life.

In the beginning of this treatise, we resolved the difficulty now before us by saying what it is that gives birth to this want, to this strange love we all have, as Christians, for abasement, for keeping ourselves bowed down, to live, in spirit at least, prostrate, and as it were on our knees. The cradle of humility is the light, the pure and infallible light, which beams forth from the Holy Face of

* Humilis dicitur quasi humi acclivis, id est imis inhærens.—S. Isidor. Hispal. ap. S. Thom. *ibid.*

† Humiltas virtutes alias accipit, servat acceptas, quia non requiescit Spiritus Sanctus nisi super quietum et humilem (Isaias lxvi. 2): servatas consummat, quia virtus in infirmitate, id est in humilitate perficitur.—S. Bernard, Epist. xliii., ad Henric. Archiep. Remens: De moribus et officio Episcoporum.

‡ Locus gratiæ Dei.—Richard à S. Victor, in cant. xxvi.

God, and which, thanks to Jesus, shines mercifully on our darkness. St. John Climachus, after some beautiful pages in which he praises the virtue of humility, mentions that a servant of God—probably himself—had one day a vision. Humility appeared to him in her beauty. Amazed and ravished with joy, the Saint cried out to her: "Tell me your father's name." Then the virgin, smiling on him with a serene grace, replied: "You wish to know the name of Him who gave me birth; but He is precisely the Being Who has no name at all; so it will not be revealed to you till you see God, to Whom be all glory to all eternity;"* and the vision disappeared. If this vision is not historically true, at least it is a holy parable which covers and signifies a Divine reality.

The Apostle St. James has written that "every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Light, with Whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration" (St. James i. 17). If there are perfect gifts and excellent graces, they are, without doubt, the Christian virtues, since their object is to render man like to God, and to merit for him the glory of heaven. St. James gives us in these words the genealogy of the virtues, and therefore that of humility.

Humility is born of God, but especially in that He is the Father of Lights. The light is the particular principle of this sublime virtue: light is its reason, its law, and its measure. Now, before any other explanation of it, this already proves to you that the abasement of which I have just spoken is only (nor can it be anything else) a legiti-

* Illa gratum ac serenum subridens: et quomodo, inquit, genitoris mei nomen scire studes, cum sit anonymus? Non prodam illud tibi donec Deum possideas, cui omnis, gloria in sæculorum æternitates.—S. Joann. Clim. Scala Parad. Grad. xxv., in fin.

mate, most reasonable, and most holy movement, impressed upon the creature; a movement which tends to place it in its proper rank, to maintain it in order, and, consequently, in truth. The truth is that which God thinks, which God wishes, which God loves. To be in the truth is, then, to be in the thoughts, under the notice, in the affections of God. There is nothing more necessary, nothing better, and nothing higher, than the truth.

Now, this Divine light, whence humility takes its source, illuminates for us two worlds at once: the infinite world, which is God, then the world which is necessarily finite, but is yet vast and profound, which is ourselves: and therefore we have said that humility is a virtue which, under the influence of the light in which God reveals Himself to us, and also reveals us to ourselves, inclines us to abasement. But because, in His inconceivable love, God has willed to unite these two worlds in one only world, which is Jesus, true God and true Man, and that Jesus forms thus in Himself a sort of new world, having its own special existence, although it cannot really isolate itself from the two other worlds—the result is that the triple centre, triple and yet one, whence springs humility, the bosom whence it draws its life, the book in which it reads its law, the sanctuary whence it derives its inspirations, is the Divine light illuminating these three worlds—God, Man, and Jesus Christ. When the soul contemplates God in the twofold brightness of reason and of faith, which is the light in which the Christian intelligence has its life, what it discovers is unspeakable, or, to express it more clearly, or rather less imperfectly, it is the unspeakable; for it sees clearly that this unspeakable Being is some one, and some one who is all, although he is distinct from all things. But that

which distinguishes Him from all things, is exactly that exclusive quality which His individuality has, in being all. He is His own all to Himself, and therefore He is all to all that exists. Without Him there would be nothing. If He were the only Being in existence, yet there would be neither void nor deficiency. And though there are other beings besides Himself, He neither receives increase, nor does He suffer diminution. He gives without being impoverished; He shares without being divided.

He is the plenitude of all plenitude: plenitude of being, plenitude of perfection, plenitude of rights.

He is the plenitude of being. He is the plenitude of being in this sense, that there is nothing in Him which is not so necessarily, absolutely, infinitely. He has nothing; He cannot have anything. There is nothing which can be an ornament to Him, nothing modifies, nothing affects Him. All that He appears to have, He is; so that all that is in Him, is always and only Himself. He is also the plenitude and the fulness of Being in this sense, that if there is any being which is not Himself (besides that there is nothing, nor can there be anything, but because He finds it good that it should be) this being borrows all from His Being; and whatever may be the blessings which He bestows upon it, it does not possess any that He has not spontaneously given it. Thus Himself and His works, Himself and His gifts—it is all which is, and all that can be. Outside of Him and His gifts, there is nothing possible but nothingness.

He is the plenitude of perfection. It is the same thing in reality as the plenitude of being; but this aspect of God forms in our mind a new conception, and affects us in a different way. All that the intelligence can con-

ceive of the true, the beautiful, the great, the good; all that can enrich, adorn, and perfect a being—all this is in God; and in its highest truth, in its absolute condition, and its first principle, all this is God Himself. Were all human languages employed to proclaim this truth, they would soon be at the end of their vocabulary; the Angels, wishing to announce it, would exhaust the power they have received of making known their thoughts: Almighty God would still be neither expressed nor described. Each of the perfections of which we can form an idea is of itself a world; and when we attribute it to God, and contemplate it in Him, it becomes more than a world. Now, we see perfectly well that His perfections are numberless; and when we have gone over them, one by one; when we have then united them together, or rather concentrated them in that perfect unity which is the necessary framework and form of the Divine conceptions, what is most clear to us is, that our own conceptions are still nothing; and knowing of Him so many and such high things, comprising therein those He has Himself deigned to teach us, if nevertheless we compare this knowledge with that He has of His own Being, and, therefore, of what He is, our knowledge is but ignorance, and our day becomes night. O abysses of incomprehensibility! O holy darkness of the Divinity! O fulness of Being and of perfection!

Of this double plenitude there results the third, essentially the same as the other two, but which, assuming in our mind a particular form, calls logically for another name. God is the plenitude of rights. Doubtless these rights are only exercised on creatures whose existence they imply; but in themselves they are eternal, and quite as necessary as the perfections from which

they are derived, and the Essence on which they depend. These rights are never in God in the state of simple power: there is nothing of this in Him. From all eternity, these rights are all in the state of action, and so complete, that when there are creatures whom these rights regard and oblige, these creatures are, it is true, modified by them; but the unchangeable Being of God is not at all so. God is, then, eternally the Creator, though He created in time; He is eternally and essentially a Sovereign, though His subjects are born in time, and are, as it were, the accidents of His Being. He is always the Master, always the Law, and always has His rights.

Now, first, it is under the empire, the power, the holy and beneficent influence of the light by which we see this triple plenitude of the Divinity, that humility has its birth. By humility, I mean the need which is at once reasonable, acknowledged, and practical, of abasing ourselves. And to each of these three adorable plenitudes there corresponds, in the creature, a kind of abasement, and a particular form of humility. If we must give them names, we will call the first the humility of submission: this humility regards the plenitude of the rights of God. We will call the second the humility of adoration: it regards the plenitude of the Divine perfections. We shall call the third the humility of praise, or rather of glorification; and it is by this we honour in God the plenitude of His Being.

If God has upon us all a plenitude of rights, what right shall oppose itself to His own? Is there any right in presence of His own? Is the idea possible, to a reasonable mind, that any creature whatsoever can allege any claim he has upon God? I mean a right

which is primary, radical, and essential. For it is true that we have at our disposal certain titles; He wishes that we should present them to Him, and He means to recognise them. It is adorable; but this sweet and intelligent industry of His love cannot change the essence of things: it is manifest that these titles themselves are a gift, and that all justice in this matter is founded in grace. Whose will, then, will erect itself against the will of God? What creature will say to Him 'no,' or 'perhaps,' or 'by-and-by,' or 'wherefore,' or 'how'? I do not speak, you understand, of a respectful interrogation, much less of the question of a child to his parent. These questions are more than permissible. God often provokes them; He inspires them, blesses them, graciously answers them; they honour His Paternity, they rejoice His Heart. But I speak of what would represent a sentiment of unbelief, or a scandal, or a murmur, or a distrust—in a word, some sort of insubordination. On the contrary, is it not just, and good, and necessary that, in presence of these august rights, the creature should abase itself, keep silence, obey, and that everything within it should be thus abased and humbled? It is not even enough that an act of docile submission should answer to the actual exercise of God's rights upon us; the whole soul must pass into this act, and infuse into it all its love and all its energy. This submission must, moreover, become its habitual disposition, and, as it were, its constant attitude before God. If it leaves it but one instant, it withdraws itself, and swerves from order: it is no longer in the truth; it escapes from its Creator, and ceases to be in accord with Him. It ought, consequently, to love this subjection, be pleased with this dependence, relish the justice, the suitableness,

the beauty of this relation, and judge from his heart that, for a creature, the perfection of liberty, as also the height of glory, is in this Divine servitude (St. John viii. 32; Eccles. xxiii. 36). If this soul is truly humble, all this will be clear, easy, and unutterably sweet. This kind of humility is full of reverence. It is the practical fruit and the normal expression of our religion towards God. It places the creature under the Hand of the Creator.* The word proper to this first degree of humility, that word which expresses the state in which it keeps the soul, the sentiment which it inspires, and all the works that it makes it perform, is that word for ever to be blest, of the Virgin herself, blessed above all: "Behold the servant of the Lord, be it done unto me, according to Thy word." (St. Luke i. 38).

By this habit of affectionate and total submission, this first kind of humility borders on the second, which we have named the humility of adoration, and which answers to the plenitude of the Divine Perfections. In face of this ocean, of which each wave is a separate sea; in face of this beauty, which, eternally contemplated, is eternally new to the eye that contemplates it; in face of this bottomless abyss, where there lives, in an infinite simplicity and unity, all that can be an object of our admiration, love, and desire, the soul feels too deeply what it is before Him Who is all not to feel, at the same moment, that all else is nothing. What wisdom, for example, can stand before the Wisdom that it looks upon? What science

* Humilitas secundum quod est virtus specialis, præcipuè respicit subjectionem hominis ad Deum.—S. Thom. 2da 2dæ, Quæst. clxi. art. 1. Humilitas facit hominem ordinatoni (divinæ) subjectum quantum ad omnia; cæteræ autem virtutes, quantum ad aliquam materiam specialem.—Id. *Ibid.* art 4.

can bear a comparison with this science? What strength can assert itself before this strength? What love, in presence of this love? Henceforth, how can we find a creature to be beautiful or good? No one is good but God, said Jesus (St. Mark x. 18). Here we have not to believe it: we see it. More quickly and more completely than the humble brightness of the stars pales and disappears before the great orb of day, all that is created vanishes in the presence of the Creator. But in this evidence that it has of the nothingness of creatures, nothing strikes the soul so much as its own nothingness. And so much is the soul pleased, so much is it ravished with the plenitude of the Divine Perfections, that it cannot but confess the pure nothing that it is. This plenitude of God it adores. This act of adoration of God is what alone can satisfy it, because, among all those acts of which it is capable, this act of adoration is the only one which, by its nature, is wholly suitable to God, and which is reserved for Him alone; and at the same time the soul, seeing itself to be this nothing, prostrates this nothing, passes by it, leaves it, and at length forgets it; yet to return to it again; for it has need of this return. Its nothingness seems to it to be the suitable throne of this All which the soul contemplates; and because "deep calleth unto deep" (Ps. xli. 8), it tastes true delight in plunging into this nothing, to come forth from it more than ever enamoured of Him who has drawn it from it; to plunge anew in God, and to admire with jubilation that what is nothing, can nevertheless, find itself in a real relation with the perfect Being, a relation living, free, and cordial; a relation of knowledge, of conversation, of exchange; the relation of a disciple with his master, of a friend with his friend, of a child with its father, of

the cross with the publican. This kind of humility is pious, meritorious, and good. It sees little value in anything created. It cries out with the Church: "Thou alone art holy. Thou alone art the Lord. Thou alone art most High, Lord Jesus." And with the Archangel: "Who is like to God?" And with the Royal Prophet: "There is none among the gods like unto Thee, O Lord" (Ps. xxxv. 5). Yes, who can be compared with our God? He dwells in the heights: and when He deigns to grant either to the heaven or to the earth the favour of one of His looks, He sees there, and cannot see anything else there, but "low things" (*Ibid.* cxii. 6). I have, then, said (I) my Master: "Thou art truly my God, for Thou hast no need of my goods" (*Ibid.* xv. 2): and "behold, my substance is as nothing before thee" (*Ibid.* xxviii. 5). In the same way that a branch laden with fruit comes from a root full of sap, so the worship of the perfections of God, and of His incomparable excellence, comes from this second kind of humility—the humility that adores. It gives, still more than the other kind, the creature to the Creator. The first makes him submit; the second, by charming him away from himself, makes him surrender himself to God.

But this passion for self-abasement, and almost for self-annihilation, produced in the soul by the evident disproportion she bears to God: this humility which, from the moment it regards God, makes it joyfully confess the nothing it feels itself to be, as its sole refuge where she can find peace. This humility, does it go so far as to blind it, and, consequently, hide from it the being its Creator has given it, its worth, and its powers?

No virtue blinds, or it would cease to be a virtue. If it is true that of ourselves we are absolutely nothing, it is

not the less true that God has made us what we are, and given us what we have. We are living, intelligent creatures, adorned with magnificent natural powers, and with supernatural gifts of still greater excellence. We are causes—causes that are free and masters of ourselves—not absolute masters, but still real masters. It is impossible, then, that this offspring of the heavenly light, that is to say, of the virtue of humility, should hinder us from seeing this truth, or should oblige us not to regard it. I do not pretend to say that of itself it inclines us to regard it. St. John Climachus says justly, that "humility is a Divine tutelage, and a veil enveloping our good works, to conceal them from our own eyes." * But what humility does not do, the other virtues effect, which are her faithful sisters, her necessary aids, and which, consequently, complete her work; so that she is in harmony with them, and approves of what they do. There is something more than this that she does. From this regard, this look, which she accepts, though she does not command it, she draws precisely the highest of her acts, and which we may term her triumph; and it is thus, and by this means, that she becomes the humility of glorification.

Seeing itself rich with Divine gifts, already possessing by grace that God of which she is the image, the humble soul is not at all inebriated by the magnificence of its destiny, and of the condition which is a preparation for it. Knowing and confessing that all that is in it comes from God, it renders to Him, first of all, immense thanksgiving. This third kind of humility is essentially grateful, as, in its eyes, every gift is a free one; all appears to it a

* Humilitas est tutela divina et velum quo opera nostra teguntur, ne illa videamus.—Loc. cit. Grad. xxv.

sign; all becomes to it a pledge of the infinite love which had prepossessed it from all eternity. Thence all moves the soul to give thanks; all impels it to love still more. Even from its wants and failings the soul takes occasion to bless God, thinking, very justly, that it is not worthy of more grace, and that, if it had received it, it would no doubt have abused it. Then, of all that it owes to the munificence of its sweet Creator, it makes Him an absolute gift, without withdrawing the least thing, without retaining anything itself, without ever attributing anything to itself. It knows well that, being free, it is by right, and, in fact, a fellow-labourer with God; that grace, all-powerful as it is, cannot make any of its acts meritorious without the concurrence of its own will. The soul understands, then, that by God, after God, and with God, it is the author of its good works, and, in the end, of its own salvation. But it does not the less see that, in the free use of its natural and of its supernatural powers, it is not more independent of God than of the radical fact of its coming into the world; that even after having received from God the power to act, yet it cannot exercise it, and especially cannot exercise it well, without Him; and that, in fact, as Jesus said, "without Him it could do nothing" (St. John xv. 5). If it happens that in a certain manner the soul works without God—that is to say, independently of His will, of His direction, and of His moral influence (which its condition here below renders possible, and which, alas! is but too frequent in its life)—this act, which is a practical error, a weakness, and a sin, remains something negative, null, and void; it is a withdrawing itself from God, and a sort of handing over its being, or its life, to nothingness. In all its moral life, such are the only acts which belong properly

to itself, and which it may justly attribute to itself. But if the action is good; if it is done in the truth, conformable to law; if it has any value; if it counts—the soul knows indubitably that it is indebted for it to God; that God has been its prime mover, its regulator, its stay, its success; that, consequently, this work is the work of God incomparably more than its own; that when God will recompense it, He will simply crown His own gifts;* and, therefore, it ought for ever to render Him all the glory. It does this with a scrupulous fidelity, remaining, however great and holy may be its work, free from all vanity, and pure from all self-seeking. Thus humility keeps the soul immovably prostrate on the threshold of that glory which God Himself declares that He will not yield to another (Isaias xlviii. 11). With the need and the confident expectation of kissing this sacred threshold, humility inspires the soul with the fear of crossing it. But if this same humble soul finds that praise is given it, and that human glory surrounds it; if even it accepts this glory (which, in itself, is lawful, when the glory is merited), it never does so, but in God and for God; and it ends by referring it all to Him, imitating the "ancients" whom St. John saw in the heavenly Jerusalem, who wore crowns, but who cast them down at the foot of the Throne (Apoc. iv. 10). The soul, then, says, "What have I in me that I have not received? and if I have received it, why should I glory" (1 Cor. iv. 7). "Shall the axe boast itself against him that cutteth with it" (Isaias x. 15)? "Thou, O Lord, hast wrought all our works in us" (Isaias xxvi. 12); and we are not

* Cum hinc exieris, recipieris pro meritis, et resurges ad recipienda quæ gessisti. Tunc Deus coronabit non tam merita tua quam dona sua.—St. August. Serm., clxx. 10.

[illegible] I think nothing [illegible] it deserves as of our [illegible] "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory" (Ps. cxiii. 1). "Thine, O Lord, is the magnificence, and the power, and the glory, and victory." "Thou hast common with Thy Father all things are Thine, and we have even [illegible] that we have received of Thy Hand" (1 Paralip. xxix. 14).

Thus this humility is a very pure essence, which is composed of the pure love of the truth and the holy passion for justice. It renders the creature to God as His property, and makes her life as it comes entirely from Him to return to Him use of its existence. Humility thus assures the supreme success of God in the Creation: for God has created everything for His own glory: and this humility makes of the soul in which it reigns a living heaven, in which the whole occupation is to give glory to the Lord. It sanctifies the Name of God—that is to say, it always puts that Name apart; it always offers it its share of homage, working and acting only by its virtue, and with the principal intention of honouring and manifesting it: as the humble Jesus, Who, on the evening before His death on the cross, said, in contemplating the entire course of His human life: "Father, I have glorified Thee upon the earth. I have manifested Thy Name to men" (St. John xvii. 4, 6). Humility is, at the same time, the triumph of God over our weakness, and the like victory in us of Jesus over Satan. It is the exact opposite of pride; and hence it places the soul at the very antipodes of hell. "God has no need of anything, being the Master of all," wrote the holy Pope Clement; "so He demands of us nothing else than to confess what He is."* This confession is the special act

* *Nullius rei, fratres, indigus est Dominus omnium, nec quid-*

of humility, by which you may see that we have given it its proper name in calling it the humility of glorification, and also how it honours in God the plenitude of His Being.

Such is humility in itself, such is its absolute state, such are its necessary acts.* Its supreme regard is for God. The triple plentitude of God is its first reason and its rule. Its essential acts are to subject the creature to God, to maintain it in the sincere and practical confession of its own proper nothingness, and to make it, in all things, but particularly in all its works, render homage to God, and to give Him all the glory. There are other acts, also, which humility commands or counsels: we will speak of them presently; but they relate to such or such a condition or state; and these states themselves are only accidental. Moreover, where these acts are demanded, they have, for their special end, to ensure the full and perfect execution of others, which are in reality the only ones which continue. Thus, let the creature be an angel or a man; let him be a just man or a sinner; let him be walking onwards during life, or have reached his term—by the sole fact of being a creature he owes to God this triple humility of submission, of adoration, of glorification. Between God and the creature no regular relation, much less a friendly one, is possible,

quam desiderat, præterquam ei fiat confessio.—S. Clem. Epist. I. ad Corinth. cap. 52.

* Among the many definitions that have been given of humility, the one of the most exact, and therefore of the most beautiful, is the one given in the Institutions of Thaulere. "True humility," he says, "is nothing else than a profound abasement of heart and of mind, which justice demands of us in the presence of the majesty of God, and to which our love of Him solicits us.—Inst. cap. ix.

without this humility.* This is founded in the very Essence of God, whence all things are derived. It is the reason why, in the exact proportion that the Divinity is better known, this humility, as a natural consequence, becomes more perfect.†

The lives of the Saints contain prodigies of humility. Yet how eminent soever this virtue may be found in a Saint on earth, it does not ordinarily attain the perfection of the blessed in heaven. The triple humility of which we have spoken is the intimate and perpetual state of all its holy inhabitants. The acts of their life in Heaven are magnificent. Even the heroic works that we can do here below do not equal, in some respects, the grandeur, the beauty, and the compass of theirs. All these acts suppose or imply this condition of humility, submission, abasement, and prostration. Thanks to this state, God, as St. Paul writes, is truly all in all, in them. This state precisely holds within them the place of God, and it causes their whole being to become that place. Now, the chief reason of the humility of the Saints in glory is, that they have the near and unveiled sight of that God Whom we perceive here afar off, in an indirect manner, by means of symbols, and, as St. Paul says, "through a glass in a dark manner" (1 Cor. xiii. 12).

But because in heaven there is an hierarchy, and in that hierarchy innumerable degrees, and degrees, also, in the Beatific Vision, whence all the rest flow, and on

* It is why St. Bernard calls it "Propria virtus divinæ exhibenda majestati."—Serm. iv. in Nativ. Dom.

† It is a very remarkable fact, that neither St. Thomas Aquinas, nor St. Teresa, two Saints so marvellously enlightened, were ever tempted to pride or vain glory. See for St. Thomas Aquinas, "La Chronique de Pizzani"; and for St. Teresa, her Life by M. Perè Villefort, Preface.

which they all depend; in proportion as, ascending these magnificent steps, we approach the Throne of God—that is to say, the living and tranquil splendour in which He reposes, and which is naught else than the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of Essence, we see humility become greater and greater in proportion. Who can measure the humility of St. Michael? Who can state that of St. Joseph? It is evident that the Blessed Virgin surpasses them in this virtue as in all the rest. No simple creature knows God as she knows Him. No one is so convinced as she is, that the creature is nothing. No one praises Him with so much joy. No one renders so purely to God as the Blessed Virgin all she has received from God's merciful goodness. Yet Mary does not attain the highest possible degree of humility. This supreme height is reserved for the Holy Humanity. One word says all that can be said on this subject. The humility of Jesus answers in every point as a virtue to what the hypostatic union is as a grace. Inasmuch as Jesus is God, so much He is, as Man, annihilated before God. But in discovering Himself to us, God also discovers us to ourselves. The first of these revelations implies the other; or rather, it is the same illumination that lights up at once the two objects: God Who speaks, and man who listens. A being to whom God shows Himself must necessarily know himself. We may, with justice, ask which of these two objects, irradiated by the Divine light, is naturally the most hidden from our eyes. The Scripture tells us clearly that God dwells in "inaccessible light" (1 Tim. vi. 16); but it declares with the same authority that the heart of man is "inscrutable" (Jeremias xvii. 9). An abyss of elevation on one side, an abyss of depth on the other: for us, darkness on both sides.

In all cases, this light in which we see ourselves, is, to humility, an additional reason for its existence, a new title obliging us to this duty, and a fresh element of strength enabling us to practise it.* The most simple knowledge that we have of God, already implies in us the consciousness of our own existence, and the evidence, therefore, that we are not God, but truly creatures, that is to say, beings that God has drawn from nothing. Now, several things serve to increase in us the knowledge that such is the common condition of creatures which we share with the brute, and which the Angels share with us. We occupy such or such a rank in the series of beings; we have such or such a nature, such or such qualities, and also such or such defects. The knowledge of these particular conditions evidently will not modify the essence of this humility, to which we are bound as creatures; but it will singularly modify its character and exercise. In fact, the smaller, the more common in itself the being is who renders its homage to God, the more proper it is that the homage should answer to this inferiority and littleness. A prince of the blood makes a less profound inclination to the king than a simple subject; a subject admitted to an audience salutes his sovereign most profoundly: it is on his knees that a criminal implores of him pardon.

How is it, then, with us? Let us not insist on our nothingness. This consideration has great force, and is much used; we find it generally, and sometimes overmuch developed, in the greater number of books which treat of humility. Therefore, after what we have said of the threefold plenitude of God, it seems to us that we

* Humilitas est virtus quâ homo verissimâ sui cognitione sibimetipsi vilescit.—S. Bernard De Grad. Humilit. I.

shall be allowed to say nothing more on this point. It is, then, a knowledge already acquired, and, besides, quite evident. This nothingness, whence we came by a sovereign act of the Divine pleasure, remains at the foundation of our being. It subsists under all the gifts of God, under nature, under grace, under glory. We should, of ourselves, fall back into it, if the almighty will of God ceased for one moment to sustain us. Our life is, as it were, but an existence which is borrowed; we only walk by being supported; we only work by the strength, and subject to the will, of a Supreme Cause, extraneous to ourselves. We could not be more profoundly poor and indigent: to look at our origin, and to the roots of our being, we must acknowledge that we could not possess less of being. If we go further still, and we remain as long as we like meditating on this dogma of our nothingness and its logical consequences, we shall find everywhere reasons for humility; but we shall not be able to find a single motive for making us proud, for being puffed up, for self-admiration, for taking pleasure in ourselves, or for boasting of ourselves before others. It is the condemnation of pride that it can only live by blindness, and that its food is nothing but lies.

But it is not so much this nothingness which moves us, nor is it so much this consideration, which generally gives us the disposition and the strength to be humble. Except that this fundamental nothingness is the condition of all that is created, what help does it give us? It is not, upon the whole, a fact which may be imputed to us. Let us, then, pass it by. Let us leave even our own nature, which, if we regard it such as God made it, will give us, perhaps, as much reason, at least, to be proud, as to be confused and humbled.

Let us go straight to our own history. Here we quit abstractions: we have no occasion to pass beyond our own being by thinking, to leave time and space—in a word, to become metaphysical. Our existence is a real fact; we place ourselves in face of facts, of living, actual, and unexceptional facts, and, what is of great importance, in face of that, which, being in us, belongs to us the most. For when it is a matter of our history, at least in a moral point of view, it is a question of what we are ourselves personally the authors, of what we have, in consequence, the entire responsibility. Morally, man is the child of his works; man is what he makes himself to be, and therefore he is what he does. What, then, is our history? and what food does it furnish to our humility?

God has His own history with us, and in us: it is from end to end adorable and admirable. But we have ours with him; and it is not all, alas! written in Him, in the book of His thoughts, of His wills, and of His complacencies. It ought to be so; it is not so, and this altogether through our own fault; and our fault is precisely that it is not so. There are in our life pages which God does not look at, He Who sees all; actions of which God is ignorant, He Who knows all. We have all sinned, and God turns Himself away from sin. He does not know it. Must we fathom here what sin is in itself? Above all, must we count, measure, weigh all the sins we have committed?

We judge the tree by its fruits, says our Saviour (St. Matt. xii. 33); and in the same way we know sin by its wages. Its wages is death (Rom. vi. 23). If death is its wages, it is because it is its natural fruit. "When concupiscence hath conceived," says St. James, "it bringeth forth sin; but sin, when it is completed, begetteth death"

(St. James i. 15). The part God's justice takes herein is to consent to this fatal generation; but the generation itself belongs to the essential order of things.

And what death does sin beget? That of the body is indeed horrible. Follow it in its antecedents, remote or near, in the symptoms which are its heralds, in its latent working, in its inexorable progress; then in the blow which it strikes, in the violent divorce it causes, in the tyranny it exercises on the prey it seizes, in its silent ravages—ravages silent as the grave, secret as night, active as fire, advancing step by step tranquilly, without interruption, and always towards its fatal term—death. If this death is the fruit of sin—and it is so most assuredly, although not all its fruit, nor the principal part of it—it is then also its image. See in the daughter the features of a father who is for us so often mysterious and unknown.

And what else? This first death is nothing. Although it comes from sin, it is not at all so great an evil that God may not draw good from it, and even unite Himself to it—Himself, Who is the sovereign good. The truth is, He has endured it, that He has passed through it, and, after Him, all the just pass through it; so that henceforth death is for the children of God the gate of Paradise. Besides, it lasts only for a time. It is itself destroyed in principle; and when the appointed day, which is already marked, shall come, it will give back all that it has taken, to Him, Who, in subjecting Himself to it, has overcome it (1 Cor. xv. 54). But the real consequence of sin—its first-born, its perfect fruit, its living image—is that "second death" of which the Scripture speaks (Apoc. xx. 6)—a total death, a radical death, a death without resurrection, a death which is the absolute divorce of a being from absolute life—the eternal hell

Sin is there unfolded ripe, in its full bloom, and manifest. We see there, what is its sap, or, rather, its venom, and the infinite evil it contains in its germ. It separates from the infinite good, and without any possible return. It wholly ruins a design of God's wisdom; it triumphs over His almighty power; it makes His love abortive; it renders vain His efforts, vain His tears, vain the effusion of His Blood; and it finishes by casting this work of God, the creature of God, the child of God, out of God, in opposition to God; below all that in the Divine thought has a place or a name—into a place of darkness, frightful and vile; the place of all the dross of the world, and of the offscouring of all things. Such is sin, and such is its work.

Now, this sin we have committed. Let us pass by, if you will, the humiliation, though so real and so deep, of original sin. But actual sins—sins commited freely, with full knowledge, in the clear light of Christianity and of grace, with full advertence, and after mature deliberation! Were there but one of these grave faults inscribed on the actions of our life, we should have merited hell; and were it not for the infinite mercy of God, we should be there at the present moment. But how many sins, and what sins, have sullied our life? Ask the question again of those Confessionals which have received, in confidence, the soothing and pregnant knowledge of these sins, and which guard it, in inviolable secrecy, for all save yourselves. Beg Him Who can make the very stones cry out (St. Luke xix. 40) to make the Confessionals speak, and thus to tell you your own history. And still will they tell you all? Have they truly heard all? Do the Confessionals know all that God knows of you? I admit that you have not voluntarily concealed any of

your sins; but the sins not perceived, the sins forgotten, the sins not understood by reason of our illusions, of our thoughtlessnesses, of our false conscience, of our blinding self-love—all those sins of which the Prophet spoke to God when he said: "From my hidden sins cleanse Thou me, O Lord" (Ps. xviii. 13). Let us place ourselves sincerely in face of our inward life; let us look at it in its lowest depths; and I do not say, shall we lift up our heads, shall we be proud of ourselves? but I say, will the simple and holy acts of essential humility, as also the regular and peaceable sentiments of which those acts are the blossom and the flower—will they seem to you sufficient? In the order of legitimate abasements, do they fill up for you the full measure, and do they acquit you in the regard of God? I ask of you, is the humility of Paradise, the humility of the Angels, of Mary, of Jesus—is this all the humility that answers to your condition, and which, consequently, God exacts of you? After God has been offended, outraged, and betrayed by us, is it enough to render Him the homage which His most faithful servants and His most devoted friends ought to render, and do actually render, Him? Your reason and your conscience cry out, *No!* No; it is not only the humility of subjection which is fitting for a sinner: it is the humility of abjection. The sinner is an abject being. He owes it to Himself, he owes it to God, to have a vile opinion of himself. Understand, then, that to despise oneself, and to consent to be despised, under this aspect of a sinner—which, alas! is the state of us all—is also to be in rule and in order, and that we cease to be so when we are without this self-contempt. And who does not feel that, for a sinner pardoned and again become just, humiliation

is a relief? that the soul which is truly contrite plunges into humiliation as into a bath; that, if it had not this refuge, life would be insupportable? If, on the contrary—and it is not rare—the soul, though it has sinned, sometimes even because it has sinned, has only esteem for itself; if in all respects it admires itself, and lays claim to the admiration of others, it becomes a kind of monster—monster in the intellectual order; so much so, that it becomes absurd: monster in the moral order, as much as, on all sides, it puts itself outside the law.

The Holy Spirit tells us that God despises a poor man who is proud (Eccles. xxv. 3). If this is true, even of him who is poor as to the goods of this world, how much more is it true of him who is poor as to the goods which are of infinite value? It is to this Catholic notion of sin, and to the splendour of the perfection which it reaches in souls eminently pure, that we must ascribe a large number of those humiliations which the Saints appeared to seek with such eagerness, and the recital of which, scandalising the people of the world, is still, for many Christians, an astonishment and a burden.

But sin is not the only thing. The fact of its commission is clear: God Himself cannot undo what is done. Though we shall be Saints in Paradise, yet the truth still remains, that we have been sinners. God will draw from it too much glory, for the soul which is perfected in Him, not to draw also from it an increase of joy. Even in this world we may taste something of this joy, although this elevated sentiment does not prevent the remembrance of faults which are past and pardoned, from often covering us with shame. It is certain, however, that the sin itself disappears under the power of grace. One tear from the heart united

to the Blood of Jesus is sufficient to drown the faults of a whole life. But the remains of these sins, but their consequences, the consequences of original sin, the consequences of actual sins! It is no longer our nothingness; it is no longer our iniquity: it is our misery, and a new reason for keeping ourselves abased and humble.

It would be more easy than opportune to dilate on this subject. If there is a commonplace topic in Christian morality it is this. But in the name of the humility of Jesus, and that you may comprehend how just is humility, and how far you ought to go in practising it, cast a look on your miseries—the look of faith, the look of a Christian. Compel yourself to see in their reality, and in their extent, and in their depth, and in their unimaginable persistence, the miseries of your mind, which is, however, that which is the most noble in you, and, perhaps, the least corrupted and depraved. Look at your ignorance, even if you are learned: shall I venture to say, especially if you are learned? Look at your forced and innumerable doubts, your distractions, your forgetfulness, your variations, your contradictions, your incapacities! And the miseries of your heart: its narrowness—often its baseness—its inclination to make self its centre, its insensibility, its coldness, sometimes its hardness, or its impetuosity, which troubles everything, and which even conscience does not stay! And the miseries of your will, which is so fickle, so inconsistent, so weak, so cowardly, and often powerless, except to be obstinate, on matters where faith, reason, propriety, and your own interest demand that you should yield. And the miseries of your character, so unequal, so fantastic, so passionate, so exacting, so obstinate, so

tyrannical! And this triple misery of our threefold concupiscence, and its baneful and continual influence —an influence of darkness, an influence of fever and of fire, an influence of error, of insurrection, of tempest, of corruption, of depravity, and, what is worse, of vain-glory and of pride; for this is, perhaps, the height of our misery, that this power of evil which is in us, while it renders us so wretched, impels us especially to pride. Join to these miseries those of the body—of the body at birth, in life, in death, and after death! Then consider the miseries of your life, in the collected sum of all these miseries, whether natural or voluntary; and the gifts, also, of graces without number, and almost without measure—of particular graces, and the ceaseless operation of God; graces sufficient to root in the soul true and admirable virtues, a sincere will to belong to God, an habitual effort to please Him in all things, and a close union with Jesus—a union heightened and cemented by frequent if not daily communions! Yes; the miseries of this life, even where mortal sin is never found, where the sole thought of it fills us with horror, but where venial sin is so very frequent, where we meet with so much of self, so much want of delicacy, so many littlenesses, such slightings of grace, so much ungrateful and foolish rebellion against the Holy Spirit, so much larceny of His graces, so many obstacles put in His way, so many unjust delays to which we condemn Him! In all this there is a great and pressing motive for humility! Were God not what He is, were we only what we are, it would be necessary to be humble, it would be just to be humble—the taste, the love, the habit of abasement would be a duty and a virtue.

Behold, then, a third source of this river of humility,

which should flow as a torrent in the city of God, to carry everywhere abundance and joy, by bringing there the Holy Spirit (Ps. xlv. 5). This source is, as it were, the confluence of the first two. You have named Him—it is Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us, God one of us. The plenitude of the Divinity and the nothingness of the creature become one living compound, one sole Being, one only Person, Who, in His indivisible unity, is absolutely God and Man. A revelation of the one, a revelation of the other, a revelation of one by the other. The two lights are the rays from one and the same centre, and enlightening, at the same time, all that can be enlightened. Humility has, then, in this mystery its sovereign reason, its full justification, its inextinguishable life. And not only she has in it her principle and her dogma, but also her perfect model. And it is for this reason our Lord has told us "to learn of Him, because He is meek and humble of heart;" * seeming thus to reserve to Himself the teaching of humility, and proposing Himself to us as the Model of this virtue.

First of all, Jesus is God, God living in our humanity, God manifest in the flesh. The Doctors of the Church ask one another if God, as such, is capable of humility. St. Thomas replies He is not; and to regard the matter as he looks at it, this is evident.† He regards humility

* St. Matt. xi. 29—upon which passage our admirable St. Augustine cries out: "It is, then, to this those treasures of wisdom and knowledge are reduced, which are buried in Thee. It is in this, then, that consists the great secret we are to learn of Thee—namely, that Thou art meek and humble of heart. Is it, then, so great a thing to be little, that if we do not see it first of all realised in Thee, Who art greatness itself, no one could ever learn it?"—De sancta Virginitate, cap. 35.

† Deo secundum naturam divinam non competit humilitas—sed

as a bridle that reason has put on the natural desire we have to be great and to excel.* It hinders self-presumption and confidence in our own strength, and excessive ambition in our enterprises. It is clear that, there being no danger of presumption, or of any excess, in God, this bridle is not at all necessary, nor can it be with any reason attributed to Him. Perhaps, however, it would be still more true to say, that in God pride is impossible, which St. Thomas proves also elsewhere;† for God being essential truth, proportion, and harmony, He possesses by nature that exact moderation which we endeavour to acquire by virtue.

Be this as it may, if in humility, we regard more especially the relish it inspires, and the movement it determines—that is to say, that praiseworthy inclination for abasement of which the angelic Doctor also speaks—who does not see that, without casting even the shadow of a shadow upon the Majesty of the Divine Being, we may and we ought to admit, that of all Beings, without exception, God is the One Who abases Himself the most and the most willingly. Does the creature really abase itself? Having of itself nothing save what it has received, if it humbles itself what real abasement is it?

solum secundum naturam assumptam.—2da 2dæ, Quæst. clxi., art. 1, ad. 4. Humilitas in Deum non cadit.—Contra Gentes. lib. iv. cap. 55.

* Temperat et refrænat animum ne immoderatè tendat in excelsa. —Summ. ubi supra, art. 10.

† In his commentary on the third book of the Sentences, where he says: "Quamvis humilitas sit perfecta virtus in homine, non tamen oportet ut in Deo ponatur, si propriè sumatur humilitas. Quod patet ex speciebus superbiæ quæ ei opponuntur: quarum prima est quum bonum quod habet tribuit sibi. Hoc quidem in homine vitium est, quia nihil habet à se; sed in Deo summa perfectio est, quia nihil habet ab extrinseco."

But if it happens that God condescends, and especially that He descends, is not this a true abasement? On this ground God is humble, as no one ever will be. The Saints have well understood this. God had just shown to His dear blessed Angela of Foligno something of His almighty power. "Now," He said to her, "regard My humility"; "And I saw," she relates, "an abyss of a frightful depth: it was the movement of God towards man, and towards His whole creation."* In this Divine narration, a great light is thrown not only on the humility of God, but on the harmony of His character.

It was this intimate, ardent, and spontaneous movement of God towards man and towards creatures which, first of all, disposed Him to create them. Their nothingness, then, is the first term; for it is on this nothing that God commenced to work. Now, is not God wonderfully humble to incline towards nothing? You will say, God created through love: love is the principle of His act, and the soul of His movement. Yes, doubtless; but still it is true, that by this movement God abases Himself; and if He was not humble in character, as much as He is good by nature, how would love make Him stoop so low? You object again: But God created man for His own glory. In truth, this glory is the supreme and necessary end of His operations. But, first, this glory is purely exterior; consequently, it is on no ground necessary: it adds absolutely nothing to that which God already possesses. It is a clothing possible for God, but at the most a clothing that is fitting; but as He does not take it from want, He assumes it by condescension, and thence He shows, by taking it, a true humility.

* See her Life, by Brother Arnaud, translated from the Bollandists, chap. iii., and the beautiful translation of Ernest Hello, chap. xxii.

Yes, my God; to make You declare Your glory exteriorly, even by the splendid heavens (Ps. xviii. 1), is yet to abridge that substantial recital, that living enunciation, of Your Being which is Your Eternal Word. It is to limit for us that which, in You, and therefore in itself, is absolutely without limits. It is to put the incomprehensible in a state to be conceived by beings who are limited in their intelligence. To write Your Name on the earth (Ps. viii. 1)—Your Name, which is the Infinite form of Your Infinite substance—though You write it in admirable characters, is to veil its Majesty, and therefore it is to humble Yourself. Your thoughts are like Yourself: they cannot be separated from Your indivisible Essence; they cannot be really distinguished from it. Yet, when You have created them, You attach these thoughts to signs; You put them into symbols; You insert them into number, and measure, and time. Your Being, then, stoops to this: Your immensity becomes little. You are no longer a God invisible; You become a God accessible, and truly within our reach. Doubtless love and wisdom and power are in all this; but a love which, as St. Bernard observes, makes Majesty give way; a love which is humble, and, therefore, it is humility, and profound humility.

Would that Thy creation rendered Thee infallibly this glory Thou askest of it, when granting it the grace to give it to Thee. But Thou hast not been able to create beings who are free, without exposing this dear glory to infinite risks. Thou confidest it, O my God! to us: it is, then, exposed. There is, in confiding this gift to us, a degree of humility which the simple fact of Thy creating beings from nothing had not obliged Thee to descend. For in this gift Thou dost really expose Thyself to

us; Thou dost accept a conflict. Now, what is this for Thee but an abasement, and a kind of humiliation? And if Thou dost deign to submit to it, is it not because Thou art humble?

Thou art inexpressibly so in Thy relations with us, relations of right and of fact.* What is there, for example, to compare with Thy discretion in the laws Thou dost impose on man? The truth is, that one single law alone obliges us: this law is to love Thee. It is so sweet! it is so grand! it ought to be so easy! All the rest which is enjoined us is only to ensure the accomplishment of this one precept. The world is ours, our life is ours: save one day claimed for Thy worship, our whole time is given us by Thee—time, that sublime creature, which gives us the means of possessing the others, and, by Thy grace, becomes a price sufficient to purchase the joy of possessing Thee without end. And this worship which Thou dost claim, what is it really but the care of our soul, the exercise of our highest powers, as also of our noblest rights; the pledge of Divine destiny, and the prelude of that life of heaven which is the participation of Thy essential life, and of Thy ineffable felicity?

And Thy services! For who will say in reality if it is man who serves God, or if it is not rather God Who serves man? Thy attributes are but so many means of strength that Thy sweet Providence devotes to our wants and even to our pleasures. Never, by constraint or by love, is the strength of a slave so consumed for his

* The Wise Man had the thought of this truth when he gave to God this magnificent praise: "But Thou, being Master of power, judgest with tranquillity, and with great favour disposest of us."—Wisdom xii. 18.

master's profit as God lays Himself out for our profit and advantage. Here, again, we say, it is love. Oh, yes! love without bounds, love without example, inconceivable love! but with the same right we say, it is humility. Is there any appearance of haughtiness in our God? He rises at the first hour, and goes in quest of workmen, to get them to cultivate His vineyard; not that this vineyard has need of them, but they have an absolute need of being employed in its cultivation. It is a question of the fecundity or the sterility of their life, and, consequently, of their eternal happiness or their eternal misery. God rises, then, and goes to seek them. Some listen to Him and follow Him; others are not ready, or refuse to go.*

He comes again at the third hour, and again calls them; and at the sixth hour, and again at the ninth. There are only twelve hours in the day. The ninth hour being passed, does he wait for the end—that is to say, for night-fall, when it will not be possible (St. John ix. 4) to work, and when the accounts will be made up? No; His heart gains a victory here over His wisdom. He cannot refrain from risking a last trial. He returns, then, once more, and departs from His usual mode of proceeding. Up to this time, following an order of

* In the Parable to which we allude, our Saviour does not speak of the refusal of those whom He invites. But He speaks of it sufficiently in another place, especially in the Parable of those who were invited to the royal nuptials; and as His conduct towards men does not at all change, that of man, alas! is always the same towards Him. Besides, it is sufficiently apparent that we do not intend to give the direct and literal sense of the Parable of the vine-dressers, but simply to make use of it as a means which God gives us of appreciating His character, and His manner of acting in our regard.

which He Himself knows the reason, He had only presented Himself every three hours. This time He makes His appearance at the eleventh hour; and if even then, when the day is already fast waning, they yield to His invitation, which resembles more a prayer than an order —if even then they accept it, who since the morning had thrice replied to Him, No, He conducts them to His vineyard, sets them to work, and when the time of payment arrives, He pays them their penny as the others (St. Matt. xx.). Would he among ourselves not be humble who would thus treat his servants or even his children?

And sinners! Here, more than elsewhere, the humility of God shines forth; for, in short, these sinners put His glory positively under their feet! So far do they go in doing this, and so long a time do they succeed in it, that it often troubles our faith in Divine Providence; and there can hardly be for the faithful a more terrible trial (Ps. lxxii. 2).

How often does God seem to give way before His enemies! How often does He keep silence at their blasphemies, withdraw Himself from their audacity, bend to their wills, permit their designs to succeed—in a word, how often does He give them, and long continues to give them, all the appearance of a victory? Is it rare that the sinner casts at God this defiance: "I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me?" (Eccles. v. 4) Certainly the success of evil is but apparent, and, especially, it is not lasting: God will have the last word—that is to say, the final triumph; but the time this success lasts, the time during which the Saints are forced to cry out: "How long, O Lord, how long, dost Thou forget us? Art Thou asleep? Ah, rise from this sleep, and take in hand Thine own cause; Thine own, since it is ours"

(Ps. xii. 1; xliii. 23; lxxiii. 22). During this time, I ask you, what becomes, here on earth, of the holy glory of God? It becomes too often the laughter of the world. St. Paul speaks of the riches, of the long-suffering, and of the patience of God (Rom. ii. 4): admit that these trials are also the great riches of His humility.

But if the humility of God is so great in His natural relations with His creatures, much more profound is it in those relations which are supernatural. Justly is it so, because in them God is personally much more engaged, and His glory is much more compromised. In this order, in fact, there is a question of a union with us so intimate, that what is Divine becomes in us one of the terms of our own being. We have explained this to you at the beginning of this book. What risks does not God thus run? And in what company must He live? For whom and for what does He make Himself responsible? To what a degree does His responsibility extend, and what does He allow to be imputed to Him? Contemplate the life of God in the Saints; contemplate it in the mass of the faithful and in the Church, which is His Temple, and His Sacrament, His Spouse, and His Body, His manifestation, and His continual action on the earth. Do not investigate how it is that the best members of this body mingle so much darkness with the bright glories of this Divine life which is in them, and how, therefore, they inflict on Him so much dishonour, either in public or in secret; but contemplate this Divine life so far as it is exposed and surrendered to the world—exposed to its looks, and surrendered to its judgments, and, we must add, to its hatred. Ah! this life, thrice holy and inviolate as it is in itself, how is it, among the children of men, calumniated, mocked, despised, and

persecuted without mercy! Yet God keeps His hold of it; God maintains it. From its very commencement He subjects it, and will subject it, to the end, to these hard and ignominious conditions. His humility faces, then, all, and obliges all His perfections to leave humility their great and chief mistress.

Then mount up from the members to the Head, and from the Church to God; mount up to the design of God to save the world, and the sinful world, by the holy mystery of Jesus. Do not yet consider what Jesus is in Himself—in that He is the Word Incarnate—but ask yourselves if God is humble in having eternally decreed this Incarnation of His Son—that is to say, a mystery in which this Son, true God, with the Father, puts Himself personally, not for a day, not for thirty-three years, but for endless ages, in a human, and, consequently, an animal nature—in a word, in a state which the infallible tongue of St. Paul calls an annihilation (Philip. ii. 7). And this is far from being all, since it is necessary to join to it what was joined to it from all eternity in the Divine Will—I mean, the mystery of the Redemption, which makes of this Good Man what you all know that He became when on earth, "the lust of men, and the outcast of the people" (Isaias liii. 3); the receptacle, the Surety, and the Victim of the sins of mankind. After this, you can take into consideration whether the Being Who has conceived, Who has willed, Who has Himself accomplished these things, is not, of all Beings, the One who abases Himself the most, and the most willingly, and, consequently, whether He is not the most humble.

Well, this adorable, Divine humility is the first that is in Jesus Christ. It is in Him because He is God,

After the vision of the Divine Essence, and that of the hypostatic union, I do not think there is any spectacle that so dazzles the heavenly spirits, and throws them into such ravishments, as that of the humility of Jesus towards God. The Father seeks for those who "adore Him in spirit and in truth" (St. John iv. 23)—that is to say, adorers who pay Him worthy and proportionate respect and honour, and who apply themselves wholly to render Him this adoration. Now, there was not a single instant in the life of Jesus when He was on earth, not a single pulsation of His Heart, which did not render to God this meet and worthy adoration. His whole being, whatever He did otherwise, either exteriorly or interiorly, was absorbed, before the presence of God, in an ineffable reverence, and in a kind of infinite abasement. And what delight He found in it! After the joy of being God, He felt no other so great as in this abasement. If He kept Himself thus in the presence of the Divine perfections, judge if He lived in submission to the rights of God. Ah! this single word, this sole thought of the rights of God, lighted up in His Soul a flaming fire of zeal—a zeal which heightened the spectacle, always present to Him, of the injury done to these sacred rights by the myriads of creatures of which He was the Head, and had made Himself the Surety. It was at this fire, always burning, that He kindled that immense desire of His Passion, which did not cease to devour Him from the first moment of His coming into the world (St. Luke xii. 50). For, from the time that He pronounced these words in the womb of His Blessed Mother: "In the head of the book it is written of Me, that I should do Thy will" (Ps. xxxix. 9), He was, in regard to His Father, in a state of absolute subjection, of a total, universal, and

incessant dependence; not doing anything, not saying a single word, not permitting Himself a look, not uttering even a sigh, without asking His Father, without receiving the order, the permission, the movement, from His Father. It is this marvellous and invincible obedience of which St. Paul speaks to the Philippians, and which he attaches to humility as its principle: "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philip. ii. 8).

As to the humility of glorification, you know what proofs Jesus has given us of it. What could He not attribute to Himself? What did He not possess as Man —He, Who was the King of all creation, resuming it all in Himself, and surpassing it; ruling, both by His dignity and His excellence, not only the whole human family, but also the innumerable society of the Angels? All was made for Him; He was the first Cause, the centre, the foundation, the stability, the harmony, the beauty, the peace, the life, the joy of all things; the supreme and legitimate object of all admiration, of all desire, of all love. What did He attribute to Himself? Did He seek His own glory? Did He sue for the glory of men? Did He display before the world the infinite secrets of His knowledge. The honour that He received, and which sometimes He claimed, did He keep it for Himself? From the depths of His holy Soul glory ascended incessantly towards God, as an incense always burning on coals that never could be extinguished. Oh, what fidelity! Oh, what purity! Oh, what humility! The man in Him was but a transparency. It could not be more effaced. It is a marvel, and the most astonishing of all marvels, that He revealed Himself by always concealing Himself, and that He said so

much by saying so little. See the place that silence, retreat, the hidden life, occupy in the thirty-three years in which He was to teach us all that we had to know! And when He speaks, how humble He is! Having a Being so sublime, and never ceasing to be so, how simple are His instructions, how artless and popular is His style! How is He the Man for all men, and especially for little ones! It was necessary that He should work great miracles; but remark with what jealous care He humbles Himself in working them. Before doing so, He prays, He lifts up His eyes to heaven; He sighs; we might say that He was, as we all are, naturally needy, and that He has nothing but what God has given Him. After the miracle is wrought, He gives thanks to His Heavenly Father, and ordinarily enjoins on all those who witness it to keep silence on what they have seen and heard. What a moment does He wait for, to render to His Divinity that most solemn testimony by which He affirmed it? It is the moment when, betrayed, abandoned by His own Disciples, bound as a malefactor, and summoned before the Sanhedrim, He is so despised that a servant could strike Him without moving His judges, and that a sentence of death is the foreseen reply to His affirmation. Certainly, the world has been saved by the charity of Jesus, but also by His humility; for, without speaking of other reasons, if He had not been thus veiled and hidden, says St. Paul, the princes of this world, recognising in Him the Saviour of the world, would not have crucified Him (1 Cor. ii. 8). It is not, then, only before God that Jesus is humble: it is before us, it is before all. He is always, He is everywhere; not like him who is served, but like one who serves (St. Luke xxii. 27). What He did on the day when He took a towel and

girded Himself, and put Himself at the feet of His Apostles, at the feet even of Judas, to wash them, and perhaps to kiss them, He was always in the disposition to do, and to do it to all.

Again, see to what a degree His Soul desires and relishes being abased; to what an extent it feels the passion of descending, in that He is clothed with our sins. Consider the humility of the Lamb, carrying all the sins of the world, as if He had personally committed them; carrying also the dreadful states and dispositions of which sin is the cause; the frightful relations which sin creates between God and the race of Adam; and, finally, the dreadful chastisements which it merits. Read again and again, in this point of view, the Gospel narrative, but especially that of the Passion. Then it is we see, in the ever-calm Soul of Jesus, a kind of sublime fever of humility. Not only, as the Apostle teaches, He despises its shame (Heb. xii. 2); but He seeks it. He is eager for it; He hungers and thirsts after it; He must needs be saturated with it (Lament. iii. 30); and He finds His rest only when inebriated with confusion at least as much as with pain. He is, in the eyes of the whole world, and of the angelic hosts, under a withering brand, when He is disgraced, condemned, ranked with criminals, the objection of the people, and, less a Man than a worm of the ground, trodden under foot by all (Ps. xxi.).

Herein is the term of that movement which attracted Him towards us sinners, excommunicated by God; herein is the object of His pilgrimage, the abode of His peace, the joy of His Heart; herein is the triumph of His humility. And so much does this humbled condition please Him, that He wishes still to live in it,

even after a Divine order withdraws Him from it, and raises Him up to heaven, at the right hand of His Father. He wishes that the crucifix—that is to say, the monument of His supreme humiliation—should remain to the end of the world, the image under which everyone may everywhere recognise Him. And, to complete all, He accumulates in one single Mystery all the abasements of His life, all the ignominies of His death; He invents, He institutes, He delivers to us the Eucharist—a Sacrament in which, while continuing with us to the consummation of the world, He will be more hidden and out of sight than in the womb of His Mother, more little than in the cradle of Bethlehem; more poor than in Egypt; more annihilated than on Calvary; and in which He is exposed, alas! to more indignities than those to which He had to submit even in the hour of His sanguinary immolation.

Well, knowing these things, living to know them, and living so much the more as we know them better, shall we be astonished that this passion for humility has passed from the Head to the members? that this thirst for abasement and for contempt, which devoured the heart of the Master, is found also in the heart of His disciples?

Shall we go to law with the Saints? or shall we leave this law-suit to the world? Or, rather, armed with the Cross, and taking the offensive, shall we not bring an action against the world, and against so many indifferent Christians, whom the humiliation of the Cross terrifies and shocks? Ah! the wonder is, not that the children of God hide themselves, fleeing from the eyes of a world which, being entirely "seated in wickedness" (1 John v. 19), is not truly worthy of them (Heb. xi. 38); the wonder is, not that they punish themselves for a pride

from which no one of them is free, and which God detests to the degree of avenging it so terribly on the Son of His love; the wonder is, not that they should wish to stifle in themselves even the smallest germs of that wicked passion, and to efface even the slightest trace of it, and that, therefore, they should seek humiliation as men search for gold; the wonder is, not that a St. John of the Cross should ask of God, as his whole reward, to suffer and to be despised for Him; that a St. John of God should so eagerly desire to be taken for a fool, and to be treated as such; that a St. Francis should request in his will to be interred in the infamous place where the criminals of Assissi were executed. The wonder is, that after Jesus, and the cross of Jesus, in presence of the tabernacles of Jesus, there should be any pride left on earth; the marvel is, that pride is to be found at all in the Church of God, and among religious men and women, and among the Priests of the sanctuary; and, in fine, the marvel is, that one of the greatest rarities of the world is to meet with one who is perfectly meek and humble of heart.

II.

If God has graciously heard our desires and blessed our efforts, you have now the true notion of humility. But light is given in order to a good life, and truth has its issue in virtue. We have, then, to enable you to see how humility should inspire and regulate your conduct, be manifested in your works, and enrich you with its fruits. The obligation here goes far, especially for you, who by your state are vowed to a perfect life. In fact, God ordains, first, that humility should be co-extensive

with your being, and then, that it should be practised towards all. He wishes this virtue to live in your heart, to guide and calm your spirit, and to have an influence even over your body, and become manifest in your outward conduct. He wishes, also, that this virtue, while taking entire possession of you, should be practised towards Himself, towards your neighbour, and towards yourselves. We have the expression of this Divine Will in those words of the holy writings: "The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God; for great is the power of God alone, and He is honoured by the humble" (Eccles. iii. 20).

First of all, imitating Jesus, be humble of heart: the exterior is nothing by itself—everything takes its shape from *within*, everything takes thence its nature, its virtue, its value. The whole of the moral life issues from our interior. Now, this interior being which is within us is the heart. The heart is our sanctuary; it is the heart that God looks at. The Scripture lays it down as a doctrine of faith: "The Lord regardeth the heart" (1 Kings xvi. 7). It is there that He abides, there He dwells in us; and if we have the happiness of His reign within us, it is the heart that is His throne. It is there, then, principally, that humility has its seat. Wherever it seems to be, if it is not, first of all, in the heart, it is nothing more than an illusion and a lie. We may say of all the virtues that they consist much more in the reality than in the appearance; but this is particularly true of humility, to which virtue belongs, too, in a particular manner, the care of discreetly concealing all the others. Let our humility, then, be interior, which is the same thing as to say, let it be true and sincere. Never

manifest more of it than you really have, or, at least, more than you sincerely wish to have; for it is of great moment, and in this matter particularly, not to confound the heart which feels, with the heart which wishes to feel. Our heart may feel a very strong repugnance for the works of humility. If, nevertheless, the only heart over which we have, under grace, a free power of control; if our heart, which is thus free, voluntarily makes its decision contrary to that of the other heart, which is not free; if, having gained the mastery, it draws it along with it, or even leaves it to its anguish, and takes no notice of it, except to humble itself—we are then humble of heart, and we give glory to God.

Entertain, also, a love for this virtue. It is a very great labour for a heart naturally proud and vain like our own, to be humble. It is a question, in truth, of changing its natural direction, and its instincts, and its affections—that is to say, of completely reversing its tendencies. But nothing being so necessary for us and so wished for by God, there is no virtue in the acquisition of which He assists us with more zeal and efficacy. Have only a good will. Solomon asked for humility when he entreated God to give him "an understanding heart"—a heart without resistance, supple to grace, and easily guided by the Holy Spirit. Often offer this prayer. Watch by the triple light with which faith furnishes you, for every occasion, of abasing self, of passing over self, of forgetting self, and, especially, of being humbled, neglected, and forgotten by others. If, by an act of energetic faith, you then call to mind the remembrance of who God is, and of what you are, of what Jesus Christ was here on earth, your heart will of itself incline to humility; it will seek actions that are humble as naturally as the stone seeks its

centre, or as water flows down a slope. It will foresee them; it will find in them treasures of truth, of justice, and of peace. It will end by your tasting in them unparalleled joys—the joy of the meeting with God, of union with God, and of the free flowing of God into the soul. You cannot love Jesus, except you love what He loves. See to what a degree, humility should be dear to you! Let your heart, then, never be empty of humility; but as among all the virtues there is not one, perhaps, which may be so easily lost, and of which the present life of itself demands so great an outlay, do not cease to make it abound in you, and keep continually near the sources from which it flows.

If your heart is humble, it will be sober in its affections, sober in the desire of indulging them while on earth, sober in the use of those with which it pleases God to enrich your life; sober, especially, in the natural hunger to see these affections returned, and to feel joy therein. I do not say that you should sacrifice all desire of being loved. God may assuredly impose this sacrifice upon you, or even exact it; but it is a sacrifice of which you may well be shy, and with which it is not always prudent of yourself to intermeddle. It leads us out of ordinary ways. Now, we may turn aside from these ordinary ways, first, by a special call from God: then it is an immense gain. But we may leave them, secondly, when deceived by a false idea of perfection, or by some passing impulse, on which nature acts more than grace; and then it is a real error, and the source of most perilous temptations. The joy that we experience when love is bestowed upon us is one thing, and the help it brings to the soul is another. I am not now speaking of the affection that we give to others, nor of the need we have

of giving it. Although our misery can spoil everything, and our self-love finds everywhere its nourishment, this love we give is less dangerous than that which we receive, and the sacrifice of it is less necessary. But the heart the most humble, and precisely because it is humble, may desire the support of another heart: it may seek that support; and if God gives the grace of finding such a heart, it may most legitimately, and, therefore, with impunity, rejoice in it in the Lord. Whether the heart is truly humble may be clearly seen by the manner in which it will use this gift of God; for then, instead of taking any enervating pleasure in it, of allowing it to fetter its interior liberty ever so little, or of abating its activity, it will always be an element of progress; it will derive from it a power of sanctification and ascension; and, so far from being a profit to its self-love, it will rather grow in charity towards others; it will increase in fervour, in zeal, in expansiveness—in a word, it will live more devoted to God and to its neighbour.

We must say almost the same thing of the desire of approbation. Carried beyond a certain point, and with certain characteristics, it is a sign of pride; and when, without falling into this excess, approbation is sought for its own sake, it is a mark that the soul is not free from vanity. But still, in its degree, this desire is natural: humility does not condemn it, and it does not prohibit us from deriving some satisfaction from it.* God

* Here are the golden words of St. Thomas on this subject: "There is no sin in anyone knowing the good that is in him, and in approving of it; for St. Paul says: 'We have received not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is of God, that we may know the things that are given us from God' (1 Cor. xi. 12). There is no sin, either, in wishing that our works should be approved; for

approves what is good. He praises it in heaven before His Angels. It is, then, the order of God that what is good should be approved and praised; if, acknowledging whence comes the good quality with which we feel we are adorned, or, knowing our good intention, or the good work we have done, we then rejoice with simplicity that men interpret, as it were, by their commendations, the good pleasure that God Himself takes in us, and His approval, which we already feel in our own conscience—if, I say, we then feel joy and consolation, there is no sin in such joy, and there is no offence to the most delicate humility.

Besides, there are some persons, naturally timid and distrustful of themselves, who have great need of encouragement, and to whom an approval, or even a commendation, given in season, is strength and joy, and a motive which urges them forward in the progress of virtue. Far from becoming a danger or a hindrance, praise brings them a help and a stimulus; and, by acquiring greater confidence, they often advance also in humility. Be mindful, however, that it is important to use much precaution in this matter; for you walk in

the Gospel says: 'Let your light shine before men' (St. Matt. v. 16). Therefore the desire of glory does not of itself show anything vicious: it is the desire of vain-glory which is a vice."—2da 2dæ, Quæst. cxxxii. art. 1o. And further on: "It appertains to the perfection of man to know himself; but to be known by others does not appertain to his perfection: therefore to be known is not, in itself, a thing to be desired. We may desire it only in so far as it is useful for something else, whether it be that God may be glorified amongst men, or that men may profit by the good they see in others, or that we ourselves, knowing the good that is in us, by the commendatory testimony of others, may be more zealous to persevere in good, and that we may become still better."—*Ibid.* ad 3.

slippery ways, bordered by precipices, where it is easy to take a false step, and where a fall may be fatal.

As to the natural love we have for pre-eminence, and especially for dominion over others, the question is more clear, and we ought to take a more decided course. You ought frankly and absolutely to banish this passion from your heart: if you do not humility, is not there; though, if sometimes a certain interior conviction, joined to a praiseworthy magnanimity, may hinder you from fearing to undertake the burdens of an office, or even incline you to embrace them, yet humility will never allow you to love superiority, or to look to the honour it gives, to covet its prerogatives, to rejoice in authority for its own sake, to make of it a throne for self-exaltation, and, at the same time, to look upon it as a means of humbling others. All this is detestable and forbidden by God. Whatever, then, may be your sentiment about such responsible burdens, you should see in them only the occasion of acquiring an increase of virtue, a more complete sacrifice of self, an ampler charity, a life more meritorious and more fruitful in good works*—in a word, according to the Gospel, we ought only to accept a high position and a great dignity in order to have, by this means, the privilege of becoming the servant of our brethren (St. Matt. xx. 25; St. Luke xxii. 25). Always remember that these magnanimous persons of

* "That in which a man excels is a gift conferred on him by God for the service of others. This is why a man should not take any pleasure in the testimony rendered by others to his excellence, except in so far that it opens to him a way to be useful to them. . . The desire of honour may be irregular in three ways. . . The third is, when this desire is centred only in the honour considered in itself, apart from any ulterior wish for the good of his neighbours.—St. Thomas, 2da 2dæ., Quæst. cxxxi. art. 1.

whom we are speaking are the exception, the very rare exception; and therefore the greater number, and especially among yourselves, would be inexpressibly rash to count yourselves among that select few; and that simple prudence counsels, or rather exacts, that, in order to remain humble of heart, and to eradicate the love of rule over others, you should avoid with the greatest care the desire of such offices, and the thought of them, for yourselves.

Never be puffed up; never aim at more than you can do, even in silent thought and within yourselves.* Distrust yourselves—a matter in which, however little may be your sincerity, you will easily agree with me that there is but too much reason to give you counsel. Do not presume on your own strength. A humble heart does not voluntarily face dangerous occasions: not that it lacks courage to brave them when there is cause to do so, but it is prudent; and it is this very prudence which constitutes its strength, by giving it a greater right to confide in God. This humility of heart keeps the soul within limits; it moderates all its passions, and by that means gives to its whole conduct a Divine character of reserve, of discretion, and of wisdom. It performs the work of wisdom so well that, in practice, it seems to be completely one with her. This is why the Scripture says, "Where there is humility, there is wisdom" (Prov. xi. 2). If there is a pride of intellect, which is, perhaps, the worst pride of all, there is also a humility of the intellect. Without doubt, it is first of all in the heart that this

* "Honour is lost when we seek it principally with regard to the desire of offices. There is no poison in the world which so easily kills the body as this dangerous pride kills perfection in the soul." —S. Teresa, "Path of Perfection," ch. xiii.

humility has its seat; but from the heart it extends to the mind: it moderates, regulates, and, in certain respects, transforms it. Further: where love ought to go, there humility ought to go also; for one cannot go without the other: humility is, to love, its vital air. Now, it is written in the Law that if we love God with all our heart, we shall love Him also with all our mind (St. Matt. xxii. 37). This, then, is a fresh reason why the mind of man should be humble.

Above all, humility of mind will render you easy to be persuaded. It will destroy in you that insufferable mania for contention and strife which is one of the most venomous fruits of pride, and a defect incompatible with that character of a disciple and of a child which is the distinguishing mark of all true Christians. St. Paul, in many places, brands this disputatious spirit: we may say, that he excommunicates it, or at least describes it as the mark of the excommunicated—that is, of those who are strangers to Jesus: "But if any man seem to be contentious," says he to the Corinthians, "we have no such custom, nor the Church of God" (1 Cor. xi. 16). The truth is, that if there is a mark which characterises heresy, it is this undisciplined, captious, and cavilling spirit. It is the parent of almost every heresy, and the prevailing tone which inspires all their disciples.* Avoid it as you would the fire; flee from it as you would from a pestilence. It would be a fire to your soul—a fire which would consume it, bringing upon it at the same time both ruin and darkness. It would be a pestilence for your

* St. John Climachus admirably says: "We do not see fire burst forth from snow. Much less do we find humility in a heretic or in a sectarian. It is the peculiar virtue of the faithful—that is, of perfect Catholics, who are purified from all their vices."—"Ladder of Perfection," Grad. xxv.

religious community, commencing with your Superiors, to whom disputation is a torment. Yield willingly when you have a discussion with another. When the subject-matter is not an article of faith, never assert your own opinion with pertinacity; and even if it is a question of the faith, defend it, as God requires it to be defended—I do not say without earnestness, but I say without harshness, without violence of language, without contempt of your opponent, and, much more, with the charitable desire of enlightening and of persuading, than with the passion of silencing and vanquishing, him. Apart from questions of the faith, do not wish always to be in the right, which is a sure means of being very often in the wrong; and when you are indeed right, submit patiently to be misunderstood, and not to be able to gain your point. Humility feels no difficulty in terminating by silence these tournaments of thoughts, of sentiments, and of words, which take place so often in the world, and which are not unknown even in monasteries. It loves much better to break off the combat, and, in case of need, to quit the arena, than to run the risk of being wounded itself, or of wounding charity, which is never any gain to truth. God has His tent always open; humility withdraws into it, and there remains in peace. "If God is for us," said St. Paul, "who can be against us" (Rom. viii. 31). Be of the same mind with him, and it is enough. Besides, if anything can lead your neighbour to have the same mind and the same will with yourself, which is far from being always either useful or necessary, it will be your modesty in the dispute, and that humility which has made you close the argument, although it might give you the appearance of being vanquished.

Pride erects most willingly a tribunal on the throne it has usurped; and such is the joy it finds in dictating therefrom its decisions, that, in pronouncing them, it does not wait for the trial. A cause called on, is, for pride, a cause judged. Quite otherwise does that man act who is humble. He does not pronounce a judgment till he has heard the charge: and, whether he has heard it or not, he judges no one without remembering that judgment is, of its own nature, a Divine act; that he must depend on God, and not act according to his own ideas; that, further, he ought to form his judgment with all that reserve which becomes a being whom the command and the aid of God do not hinder from being fallible; that he ought to form it with all that indulgence which befits a sinner who, as amenable to God, remains always on a level with him whom he judges. Be, then, sober in your judgments, more sober in your condemnations, and very ready to excuse. Readily and habitually presume well of everyone, and endeavour to take all in good part. You will be mistaken sometimes, doubtless, in acting thus; much less frequently, however, be assured, than if you were suspicious and mistrustful; and these errors themselves, when you fall into them, will cause no inconvenience, or they will be largely counterbalanced by many advantages.

Of course humility of mind moderates idle curiosity. I have no need to teach you that curiosity is a very strong passion. No one can forget the place it holds in the history of the Fall. It is, perhaps, for having been the first who yielded to it, and so grievously, that Eve has left it in such vast proportions as an inheritance to her daughters.

Curiosity is fed, doubtless, in many ways, by the con-

cupiscence of the eyes; but by other means, no less numerous, it arises from the pride of the intellect, and emanates from it as from its principle.

The first kind of curiosity, that which is especially vain and weak, is also very fatal, and particularly in the Religious Life. It occasions almost an infinite number of distractions, of pre-occupations, of annoying and dangerous recollections, of phantoms and shadows, which obscure the interior of the soul, and render it less and less accessible to the influences of grace. It develops human sensuality, earthly tastes, and the spirit of the world, and, consequently, it renders the Christian sense less delicate. It causes a multitude of temptations against all the virtues—many sins of the tongue, many and many faults against regularity, particularly against silence, whether that of the lips or that of the soul. It stirs up the passions; it is a stumbling-block at every moment to grace, and often helps nature to continual banquets. It dries up the heart in doing violence to the spirit; it is the opposite to recollection; it destroys all unction, renders prayer almost impossible, and undermines the interior life.

But still more malignant is the curiosity which comes from pride of mind and intellect, and which, impelling the soul to acts of rashness, launches it into a sea of plans and adventures. Ah! you desire, doubtless, to know and to understand—desire it ardently, desire it always. It is the cry of the Scriptures, of the Fathers, and of the Saints. This desire is the breathing of the Christian soul, the natural and indispensable fruit of his faith, the exercise of his hope, the witness of his love; for God is truth, and love lives upon light. You do not

comprehend either your beginning or your end, or the grace which has been given you, or the glory which is promised you, if you do not hunger and thirst to know and to see. It is not a question, then, under pretext of humility, of praising and encouraging any intellectual sloth and cowardice: still less do we pretend to canonise ignorance. If you have ever thought that there was any merit in letting your mind remain uncultivated and inactive, and that ignorance, as such, is a condition, a means, and especially a mark of sanctity, you have fallen into a frightful error. Whoever acts in this way does not lower, but degrades himself: he does not humble, but he stultifies himself; and, far from honouring God, He disowns, betrays, and runs the risk of losing Him. Your mind is like a sum of money confided to your free use. You may have received five talents, or two, or only one: the more you have received, in this as in all other things, the more will be demanded of you (St. Luke xii. 48). But if, having but one talent, you represent to God that it is hidden in the earth, and wrapped there in the napkin of indifference and darkness, without doubt you will be condemned and rejected. Despise all knowledge, falsely so-called: estimate at their true value the profane sciences, and, so far as you are obliged by your profession to teach them, give them the time which is allotted, and the application that is necessary; and even then take jealous care to supernaturalise these studies, by referring them all to God and the salvation of souls. But as regards the science of the Saints, the science of religion, the science of the soul, the science of God, esteem it most highly, love it passionately, and study it as much as your capacity and your state will

allow. It is for this end, according to the teaching of St. Paul, that the Spirit of God has been given you.* And what is it that renders so invaluable that almost complete disengagement in which you live from temporal cares—your separation from the world, your solitude, your long-continued silence, your temperate diet, the regularity of your occupations, the tranquillity of your life? Is it not precisely that all this ensures you the interior and exterior leisure to give yourselves to study, to meditation, to the contemplation of that "sweet first truth," as St. Catherine of Sienna calls it, and the other truths which flow from it? For God is ever pleased to reveal His secrets to those who search after them, with humility, doubtless, but also with piety—that is to say, with zeal, courage, and perseverance. You can never know too well the Christian doctrine, and, above all, that golden book we call the Catechism. It is shameful, it is unpardonable, for a Religious not to be well versed in this knowledge, and her ignorance may become a real danger to her. You cannot know the Holy Gospel too well. You can never be learned enough in that science which was all the glory and all the doctrine of St. Paul, the science of Jesus and of Jesus crucified (1 Cor. ii. 2); for, in a word, Jesus says Himself, in His prayer to His Eternal Father: "Now this is eternal life to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent" (St. John xvii. 3).

Besides, do not think that if your profession favours you in this respect, that your sex dispenses you from this labour. You will not come, doubtless, to reason like

* 1 Cor. ii. 12.—It is of the same Spirit that he says elsewhere: "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God."—*Ibid.* 10.

learned men; you will not be able to argue or to draw conclusions as they do: you have no need of this ability; it is not at all necessary, and might be out of place; at least it might lead you to do what would be out of character. But, in the absence of any psychological observations, the history of the Church is a witness that what you want in precision you often gain in intuition; that delicacy generally compensates in your sex the want of strength; and that the conceptions of the learned are often surpassed by your presentiments. Hence we often see with what vivacity and how quickly you understand and embrace, when we preach them to you, truths which assuredly you would not be able to clothe in words, but which, however, were already in your mind, and which lived in your soul and in your actions. Instruction, strictly so called, has clearly an influence in this respect; yet we should be in error if we thought it indispensable; for, although study is a duty for those who have the talent for it, we see, in truth, that the disposition of the heart, fervour of charity, purity of life, and prayer, advance us in these matters more than study.* St. Teresa was not, by a great deal, so learned as St. Gertrude; yet who will say which of the two was higher in the intelligence of supernatural truths, and which of the two taught them best? And how can we forget that the admirable St. Catherine of Sienna was, humanly speaking, extremely ignorant? "My Father," said Jesus, "I thank Thee that Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones" (St. Luke x. 21). "The communication of God, you know, is with the simple" (Prov. iii. 32); and who is so learned as he of

* St. Paul speaks "of the acknowledging of the truth, which is according to godliness."—Titus i. 1.

whom David says: "Blessed is the man whom Thou shalt instruct, O Lord, and shalt teach him out of Thy Law" (Ps. xciii. 12). We may confidently assert that in regard to the science of Divine things we only have a true and perfect knowledge when we are instructed by God Himself; and is it not the frequent testimony of Doctors of the Church, and, among others, that of St. Thomas Aquinas, that what we read in their admirable writings they learned much less by means of books and of study than at the foot of the crucifix and by prayer? This is your school, as it was theirs.

But, far from being contrary to humility of mind, what we have just said necessarily supposes it. Granted that in your holy researches humility is not your lamp, or at least the flame of that lamp: it is assuredly the oil which feeds this flame. In truth, the more humble of mind you are, the more rapid and the greater will be your progress in the science of God; and the greater is your progress therein, the more reasons will you see for humility of mind, and the greater will be your relish for it, and the greater also will be your fidelity in its practice. But know how to keep yourselves within bounds; take into consideration your proper limits, and patiently submit to your condition. Remember those wise words of the Holy Scripture: "Seek not the things that are too high for thee, and search not into things above thy ability; but the things that God hath commanded thee, think on them always, and in many of His works be not curious; for it is not necessary for thee to see with thy eyes those things that are hid . . . for many things are shown to thee above the understanding of men" (Eccles. iii. 22, 25). Desire, then, to see opened at the end of the world the gates of those temples that we call the mysteries of our

faith. Once more, I say, this is praiseworthy; but, while on earth, account it to be an honourable and a most happy circumstance to be able to remain on your knees in the porch. To aim at seeing in this world what God forbids you to look at, is to deserve to be made blind, according to that which is written: "He that is a searcher of majesty shall be overwhelmed by glory (Prov. xxv. 27). The history of the Church is full of the falls of the curious. Be sober, then, in these matters, as St. Paul exhorts you when he recommends knowledge and wisdom (Rom. xii. 3). The heart gains a great deal by these sacrifices of the mind, and strength is made perfect by these evident infirmities of our intelligence. Believe with simplicity to-day; to-morrow "the veil will be taken away," the great vision will appear, and all mystery will vanish for ever. When God has promised to unveil himself—and each moment brings us nearer to the time when we shall see His Face—we may wait in peace. Besides, "My just man," saith God, "liveth by faith" (Heb. x. 38). Take pleasure, then, in this holy darkness, which in so many respects is, to the eye of faith, only brightness. Your soul is purified by this faith (Acts xv. 9). It is a preparation for your intelligence; it forms in you a capacity for heavenly things. The more docile you are here below, the more instructed you will be hereafter on high; the more you are at first children—children in mind and heart, which is the same thing as being humble—the more you will have hereafter of that noble and strong manliness that St. Paul calls "the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ." (Ephes. iv. 13).

Passing from the heart to the mind, humility descends to the body. Humility wishes for the whole man, and to take entire possession of it, because there is nothing in

man which God is not pleased to have. "O God," saith the Wise Man, "Thou lovest all things that are, and hatest none of the things Thou hast made" (Wisdom xi. 25). We may call to mind, as the duty of this exterior humility, all the corporal austerities which are customary among Christians, and which form a part of the regular discipline in the monastic life. They are, doubtless, acts of mortification; but humility finds in them no less a very salutary nourishment; and there are many who are incomparably more affected, and also more sanctified, by the *humiliation* of these acts, than by any pain they may occasion. This is particularly true in the case of so many observances well known to Religious, and which humble them exteriorly, without giving them anything to suffer. Such are those profound inclinations, those prostrations, those genuflections before altars and statues, before Superiors, and even before each other; the custom of kissing the ground or the feet, and, in a word, the fulfilling all the lower offices in a religious house. The more humble you are, the greater is the relish you will have for these practices, and the more eagerly will you desire them. All these means are helps to assist you to do the work of God; they are the ruin of pride; they strengthen virtue, disengage the soul from the things of this world, elevate it in grace, render it more like to Jesus, and ensure for it much the more the good pleasure of our Heavenly Father. However, take care (and this caution is of great importance)—take care that these acts are not mere empty forms, and, so to speak, bodies without the soul. Never separate what God has joined together—the outward and the inward. Sin alone and Satan separate these two things; and this is why Satan is a liar, and why sin is a lie. It would be deplorable that an act of

humility should not be made humbly. Never, then, humble your body without also humbling your heart; and ever humble yourself much more inwardly than outwardly, if it is possible; since the heart is God's part, and He sees what passes there.

But, apart from these particular acts, there is a habit of exterior humility in which the soul, which is truly humble, always maintains the body. There is, exteriorly, a self-restraint, a reserve, a calm, which gives to the whole physiognomy and to every step that ineffable beauty, that harmony, that charm, which we express by the word "*modesty*." The look is modest, the voice is modest, the laugh is modest, and every movement is modest. Doubtless we ought, in this matter, to avoid everything that may savour of affectation. Nothing is less humble than certain affected airs that sometimes religious women assume. If they think to make themselves edifying by these affectations, they ought to know that they are only aping humility. Nothing is further from affectation than true modesty. St. Paul says: "Let your modesty be known to all men, the Lord is nigh" (Philip. iv. 5). There, in fact, is the secret of this ravishing and holy attitude. God is nigh to this soul, and this soul never forgets it: it lives in His Presence, and acts under His Eye, in the company of the good Angels. Such was the Blessed Virgin; and it is impossible to imagine her otherwise. Such, above all, was Jesus Christ; and in the remembrance of this truth, St. Paul saw so great a power, that when he would obtain from the faithful all that he desired, he contented himself with evoking the modesty of Jesus, saying: "I, Paul, beseech you by the mildness and the modesty of Christ" (2 Cor. x. 11). I venture, then, also to allege this Divine modesty as a reason for

asking you to be wholly, and at all cost, and always, humble in heart, in mind, and in body.

But this humility, with which you will become thus wholly clothed and penetrated, you should exercise towards God, towards your neighbour, and towards yourselves.

And, first, towards God: that is understood. Call to mind that saying of the angelic Doctor: "What humility principally implies, that which makes its inward being, its essential life, is subjection to God."*

For the point of departure, that is to say, for principle and for rule, take in this matter what we have laid down of the three forms of humility, corresponding to the three aspects of the Divine plenitude—humility of submission, humility of adoration, and humility of glorification. In this triple humility consists the substance of the duties you have to discharge, if you wish to be truly humble towards God. However, entering into the order of the applications, we shall say to you, first of all, be humble in the worship you render to your Creator and Lord, Who, from love, is also your Saviour and Redeemer. Be humble in prayer; always humble yourself on beginning it, and, as you continue to pray, remain humble. "The prayer of him who humbleth himself pierceth the clouds," says the Wise Man (Eccles. xxv. 21). Oh! how often the want of success in our prayers arises from not taking the time or the trouble to humble ourselves when we pray! Think only Who He is Whom we are approaching, and who we are ourselves. Prayer, say the Saints, is an elevation of the soul to God. Does not the Gospel tell us that the first condition of being raised is to abase our-

* Humilitas secundum quod est virtus specialis, præcipuè respicit subjectionem hominis ad Deum.—2da, 2dæ, Quæst. clxi, art. 1.

selves (St. Luke xiv. 11)? Prayer is also a banquet. Is it not the precept, or at least the counsel, of our Lord, that if we are invited to a banquet we should go and sit down in the lowest place (St. Luke xiv. 10)? "I will speak to my Lord," said Abraham, "I, who am but dust and ashes" (Gen. xviii. 29). See, then, how we ought to approach God. Oh! think how the Angels in their glory speak to Him! And the Angels are so holy, and you, whoever you may be, are so sinful! Indeed, it is not in your own name that you should pray, but in the Name of Jesus Christ (St. John xv. 16), as the Gospel teaches, and, at the same time, enjoins on us. It is by Jesus only, through His mediation, through His merits, through His Blood shed upon the cross, that you have access to the Father. In order, then, to approach God, and to pray to Him as you ought, you have a title exterior to yourself, and one that is borrowed. Do you wish to have an excellent practice of humility in the commencement of your prayers? Do what David did. Do not present yourself to God, do not appear in His Presence till you are clothed with justice (Ps. xvi. 15)—that is to say, till you are hidden and lost in Jesus. Deny that you are yourself, and affirm this truth, saying to God: It is He, O Heavenly Father, and not I; for I pray; but it is not so much I that pray—it is He, it is Jesus Who prays in me. "Look, then, O Lord, on the Face of Thy Christ" (Ps. lxxxiii. 10). I am wholly surrounded by Him, inundated with His Blood, sheltered in His Heart. My place, naturally, would not be even at Thy Feet. If Thou regardest only my sins, I must fly from Thee, as Adam did, or rather, I must cast myself into hell. But for the sake of Jesus, by the power of Jesus, in the Name of Jesus, I am before Thee, and close to Thee; I cling to

Thee, I look on Thee, I kiss Thy thrice-holy Feet; and presently I shall not fear to mount higher, even to Thy Knees, and imprint a kiss on Thy Heart; waiting until, elevated in glory, even to Thy Divine Presence, I may receive from Thee and give Thee in Paradise that ineffable embrace which the Holy Spirit calls "the kiss of the mouth" (Cant. i. 1). For you may, without doubt, speak thus to this Adorable Majesty, and ascend even to these heights; but on the condition of being humble, and of being, first of all, most profoundly abased. "The prayer of him who humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds."

What I am now saying of meditation I say, also, of every kind of prayer, especially of that august prayer we call the Divine Office, and the Divine Psalmody. Keep yourselves humble in body and in soul while you are singing those inspired praises, which associate you with one of the most sublime ministries of the Church, and with the canticles, even, of the Angels. Recite or sing them, then, as if you were in heaven, and before the Throne of the living God. You have a still better title to do this when you assist at the Holy Mass. Ah! before that unheard-of and profound humiliation of Jesus, before that God annihilating Himself and immolating Himself, day by day, for you—to what depths ought you not, in spirit, to descend, and to abase yourself in heart? And when you receive Holy Communion, should you not descend still lower, if it were possible? All the acts of virtue are admissible at that precious moment, all are required. There is no need of precept; the heart is then a law to itself, and its duty is its need. Yet the Liturgy of the Church enables us to see that, among that assemblage of virtues which the soul ought then to send to

meet the Lamb, humility holds the rank of honour, or rather it is charged to conduct and to present all the rest. Had you the purity of the Archangels, and the fervour of the Seraphim; were you, by impossibility, as holy as the most Holy Virgin, you ought still, before communicating, to strike your breast, and repeat three times, "Lord, I am not worthy." In fact, the humility of Mary, at the moment when she received the Word, and conceived Him in her chaste womb, is precisely the humility which it is fitting you should have when you receive the Holy Eucharist.

According to the doctrine of faith, the entire life of the Christian is but one grand sacrifice, and every action of which this life is composed should be clothed with all the characteristics of a special offering. Even though he who offers it takes a portion of the victim, or gives one to his neighbour, the principal portion is always reserved for God as His proper due, which He does not yield, nor can He yield it, to anyone else.

St. Paul practically lays down this theory when he writes: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all in the Name of Jesus Christ, and for the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31). When he tells us to do all in the Name of Christ, he points out to us the duty of beginning all things in God, to unite ourselves with Christ in our actions: consequently, of acting by His Spirit, according to His way of acting, and His intentions. When he tells us subsequently to do all for the glory of God, he shows us the obligation of dedicating and referring everything to God, directing it all to Him, and, lastly, of leaving all in the hands of God. Therein consists the proper character of the virtue of religion, and especially of the pre-eminently religious act, which is

sacrifice. Now, if such ought to be the life of simple Christians in the world, how much more should it be the life of those who, like you, live in an acknowledged state of religion and consecration?

Humility relishes this doctrine in an unspeakable manner. The soul which is entirely faithful clings to it wholly. As God does not approve of sacrifices but those He Himself has prescribed or counselled, and which He has both ordered and regulated; as He does not receive them, if the rules fixed on by Himself are not exactly kept: if they are offered to Him otherwise than in the spirit which so Divine an action demands—therefore humility takes especial care that the soul does not act by any mere natural impulse. Humility ordains that in all things we should leave the initiative to God; and thus recognising and honouring His perfection as the primary cause, and also His right of sovereignty, it commands that, by prayer or by counsel, and sometimes by both one and the other, we should take the first movement from God, that we should date all from grace, that we should work, in a word, as Jesus worked, Who said: "Of Myself I do nothing," but according to the word that I hear within, receiving it of My Father, I see, I speak, I act (St. John v. 30). This humility also watches over our intention, that in all our actions it should be, and remain, most pure, as it is written: "Whatsoever ye do, do it from the heart, as to the Lord, and not to men" (Coloss. iii. 23). So that the action or the victim, chosen at first among the flock of legitimate works (the only one in which are found the victims which we have the right to present to God), may remain without spot in the oblation, as it is without defect by nature. Humility does not suffer, then, that we should mingle with the sacrifice any

strange or profane element—that is, that we should act through any view that is purely or principally human. And when the work is thus done, when the victim is thus offered and immolated, humility, more attentive and jealous than ever, hinders any return of self-love, any vain complacency from insinuating itself afterwards to cause a rapine in the holocaust. It follows from this that the soul appropriates nothing to itself; that it loses nothing; that before, during, and after the action it says and it repeats: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Thy Name give the glory" (Ps. cxiii.). It thinks very sincerely that, whatever it has done besides, it is an unprofitable servant, and that it has done only what it was its duty to do (St. Luke xvii. 10). It believes with St. Paul, that though it is not conscious to itself of any thing, yet it is not thereby justified (1 Cor. iv. 4). In a word, like Job, the soul is always rather "fearful of its works" (Job ix. 28). Accepting with gratitude the inevitable profit that, according to the order of God, every sacrifice brings with it—profit of merit, and an increase of the grace which corresponds to it while awaiting the increase of glory; profit of the testimony rendered by the conscience, and of the peace which it gives, and of the joy which flows from it—the soul scrupulously returns to God all the honour, saying, with Jesus, "I seek not My own glory, but the glory of My Father" (St. John viii. 50). You may see by this, how, and how much, God is served by humility. It is like an angel guardian of the soul, to guard the priceless treasures that God has confided to it. It is the angel of His glory, because it is the angel of your sanctity. You have no friend so devoted or so useful. Listen to it always; obey it in everything; never leave it, and never suffer it to leave you.

If humility keeps the soul thus subject to God in all its actions, you can guess without difficulty how it keeps it peaceably and lovingly submissive to all the arrangements of Providence—that is to say, to all that God permits to happen to us. It disposes the soul to find in all things the good, that, setting aside what second causes may contribute to them, God, on His part, always imparts to them—namely, an infinite wisdom, an adorable justice, a love without limit, and which never ceases to work. This soul, then, bows itself down; it is tractable, it is sweet. It knows not what it is to murmur, and the mere thought of rebellion affects it as a horrible absurdity. It tastes that peace of which David sang: "Much peace have they that love Thy law, and to them there is no stumbling-block" (Ps. cxviii. 165). Wherever God puts it, it feels itself in its place. In whatever manner He treats it, or suffers it to be treated, it thinks and confesses that it is just, and ceases not from blessing Him. It gives thanks for everything; for everything being to it a mark, and, as it were, a sacrament of love, everything becomes its happiness, everything gives it joy, everything increases its love, and unites it more closely to Him Who is the sole object of its affection. The soul is never happier, however, than when it sees that God loves it so much, and, consequently, counts so much upon it, as to give it some part in the holy humiliations of Jesus. The days wherein it communicates, in the abasement of its Saviour, are its real festival days: it rejoices in them in secret, under the ever-open and watchful eye of its sweet Heavenly Father. The soul adorns itself with these humiliations as with so many jewels; and while it never permits itself to seek glory from man, yet it glorifies itself now, at liberty—like St.

Paul, so profoundly humble, who, nevertheless, gloried in the Lord by reason of his infirmities, of his tribulations (2 Cor. xii. 9), in the share which was given him in the cross of Jesus. "God forbid," he said, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. vi. 14).

But it is not enough, we have said, to be and to remain humble towards God; we must also be and remain so towards our neighbour.

While saying to the Bridegroom that "His Name is as oil poured forth" (Cant. i. 2), the Bride expresses, under a charming figure, the entire mystery of grace, which is, in fact, the mystery also of Jesus. She means to say, that in reality nothing is loving but what is holy; nothing is so communicative, and essentially communicated, as He Who is in Himself incommunicable; that, in a word, nothing is given and poured forth as God, Who by nature, and by the condition of His Being, belongs only to Himself, lives absolutely in Himself, and must refer everything to Himself. She calls it the gift of God (St. John iv. 10); and by the very fact that she speaks of a pouring forth, she assigns to this gift neither term nor limit: she makes us understand that this gift is universal.

In fact, Jesus, as regards Himself, is the happiness of all—the pardon, the justification, the grace, and the salvation of all men. There is not a single person in the world, nor will there ever be, in whom this Divine element, does not exist in a certain degree, more or less. Even according to nature, we are all made in the image of God.

We are each of us one of those thoughts which He

has eternally conceived; and, further, we are capable of knowing this, and of blessing Him for it. Each man is a mirror which reflects God, and which, by reflecting Him, beholds Him. It is already to resemble Him. But grace raises us still higher. The Divine enters into us in such a way that it becomes in us a second nature, and so sublime, bear in mind, that it is a real participation of the Nature of God. In this order, we deserve to be called, by the Holy Spirit Himself, Gods (Ps. lxxxi. 6). This participation of the Divine Life is the state of all Christians, and the vocation, consequently, that for which all men, at least radically, are fit: it is this aptitude in man that we may call the Divine by excellence.* There is another which, having reference, doubtless, to the good of all, is, however, reserved only to certain persons: it is the Divine element of authority. It exists in two orders. For there are the ministries of nature, such as the domestic paternity, and the political or social paternity, which, in fact, is a royalty. There are also those of grace, such as the Priesthood, and all the consecrated hierarchical superiorities in the Church. Now all this is still the Divine element—the Divine element communicated, shared, derived, but truly the Divine. And this is why, in the Law, those who command, whatever else they may be in themselves, are, by reason of their office and their dignity, honoured by the name of "Gods." "Thou shalt not speak ill of the Gods," said Moses, in speaking to the people of their chiefs (Exod. xxii. 28).

Now, humility is the practical sense of what is Divine.

* Illud secundum quod homo excellit . . . est quasi quiddam divinum in eo.—S. Thom. Summ. 2da 2dæ, Quæst. cxxxi. art. 1.

You have seen how it recognises and honours what is Divine in itself. It knows how to recognise and honour it also, as it is developed in creatures; and as wherever it beholds it, it bows down the soul and makes it submit, it thus humbles itself also before every creature in whom God resides.*

First of all, it keeps us in a perfect subjection to all those who are established over us by their power. It causes us to render the requisite homage and respect, and truly a sort of worship, because faith, always and immediately passing beyond what is visible, human, and private, places us in face of a spiritual and Divine reality—namely, holy authority; and you well understand that, in constituting the reason, the measure, and the sanctity of our abasement and of our dependence towards creatures, this certitude of faith constitutes at the same time its greatness and dignity. You see thus why true Christians, who are so humble, are at the same time so intrepid. Submissive to all, and servants of all, they have, however, but one Master, and they only obey God.

But if even humility has only before her the divinity of excellence—as, for instance, that excellence which grace confers on all the baptised—it still bows down with a profound sentiment of reverence. Though this Divine character may exist in different degrees in this or that soul; though it may exist in a greater or less degree of perfection and splendour; or, on the contrary, be more or less shackled and impeded, the soul always sees in it

* Humilitas præcipuè respicit subjectionem ad Deum, propter quem etiam hominibus humiliando se subjicit.—S. Thom. 2da 2dæ, Quæst. clxi. art. 1. Humilitas proprie respicit reverentiam quâ homo Deo subjicitur; et ideo quilibet homo, *secundum quod suum est*, debet se *cuilibet* proximo subjicere, *quantum ad id quod est Dei in ipso.—Id. Ibid.* art. 3.

something Divine—that is to say, something to which every creature is indebted; something which commands its esteem, its homage, and a measure of abasement. It never omits, then, this great duty, and it infallibly seeks and discovers what is Divine in the persons with whom it treats. Either it does not regard the rest, which happens whenever it is not charged to attend to them, or else it looks on them only through this supreme brightness of what is Divine. If it even meets with a person whom it knows, or may presume, not to be any longer in the grace of God as open sinners, or who have never been in that grace as infidels; applying itself always, nevertheless, to regard what God still leaves of Himself in the sinner, and the grace He wishes to give to the unbeliever; having, besides, the resource of considering in every case that Divine disposition which is in the inner heart of every creature, and is in man so beautiful—it obstinately cherishes in itself the charm of its sweet vision. Contemning sin, deploring the state of him who, being able to become a god, is yet but a man, humility continues to honour the person of the sinner, both *within*, by the judgment it passes on him, and *without*, by the respect it pays him, and, according as there is need, by the devoted aid it renders him.

It is not, as we have already more than hinted—it is not that the humble soul shuts its eyes to the gifts it receives, whether of nature or of grace; for how, then, could Mary have been able to sing her *Magnificat?* No! she shows clearly enough that she is humble; and it is almost from this very fact that she commences her chant. But can anyone more fully declare and more gloriously magnify, than she does, the graces she had received from God, and the sublime designs for which she had given

Him her concurrence? The soul, then, has no difficulty in admitting, whether to itself or to others, that it has what others have not;* that at the present moment, not being, so far as it believes, in the state of sin, it is more agreeable to God than they are who have fallen into it, and who persevere in it. Supposing that it could say it without a lie, and that the glory of God or the good of souls obliged the soul to confess it, it would simply say with St. Paul: "They are Hebrews, so am I; they are Israelites, so am I; they are the seed of Abraham, so am I; they are the ambassadors of Christ (I speak as one less wise), I am more: in many more labours, in prisons more frequently, in stripes above measure, in deaths often" (2 Cor. xi. 22). Such, however, is the character of humility, that it inclines us to look more at the good we find in our neighbour than the evil; but, on the contrary, when we ourselves are in question, this virtue persuades us to consider our own defects, and not to dwell on the qualities which compensate for it. Humility, then, has no difficulty in comprehending and in practising that great precept of St. Paul, who wishes that "in our humility we should all mutually esteem others better than ourselves" (Philipp. ii. 3)—an appreciation which, though at first it may seem strange, is well founded, since, in order to judge in this matter with truth and justice, it is enough to consider what there is of God in our neighbour, and, to oppose to that, what there is of ourselves in ourselves.

It is a kind of abnegation which crucifies our pride, and becomes very often a torture to our nature. But

* Absque præjudicio humilitatis possunt (illi qui Dei dona participant) dona quæ ipsi acceperunt præferre dona Dei quæ aliis apparent collata.—S. Thom. 2da 2dæ, Quæst. clxi. art. 3.

the property of humility is to render this practice easy; and God alone knows to what a degree this habit advances the cure of our poor sick soul, what roots of sin it destroys, what virtues it protects and nourishes, and what merits it helps us to acquire! God alone knows how it simplifies our intercourse, how sweet and flowing it makes our life, what an element of peace and union it is in religious communities, and the blessed condition which it would ensure to mankind if they would consent to submit to its yoke! In truth, one cannot conceive anything more social than this admirable virtue, though one so calumniated and so stigmatised by our modern reformers. It is such a principle of harmony and of unity that, in order to make the entire earth the vestibule of Paradise, it would be sufficient to empty it of pride. Then the reign of humility being everywhere established, everywhere love would be free; and the perfect liberty of love is the kingdom of God.

Despise, then, no one. Look principally at every man's bright and good side, and try to make him sensible of it. If it is your duty to bring men back to order, and this may be, since order exists; and if it is your duty to maintain them in it—it is for their happiness to be brought back to it, after they have departed from it. Believe that the best means to make them return and preserve their due rank will be, as often as you can, humbly and sweetly to make them understand that, in very many respects, you, who command them, know and confess yourself to be their inferior. Praise your neighbour cordially and willingly; do him honour, extol seasonably his good qualities, his virtues, his good works—not, indeed, for the purpose of flattering him, which is an evil, and does mischief, but in order to honour the gifts of God

in him, and for him to do good to himself. Place yourself sincerely in spirit below all, without exception, saying of yourself, as the Saints said (though there is no need to be a saint to believe and avow this truth)—namely, that if such or such a miserable being, a thousand times worthy of hell, and, perhaps, here on earth of the scaffold, had received the graces which, in His incomprehensible mercy, God has bestowed upon you, he would probably have made a better use of them than you have done, and would occupy in glory a rank to which your continual miseries will, perhaps, hinder you from ever reaching.

Has not our Lord said: "Woe to thee Chorazain, woe to thee Bethsida; for if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the mighty works that have been wrought in you, they would have done penance long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes" (St. Luke x. 13)? Did not St. Paul call himself "the least of the Apostles" (1 Cor. xv. 9), "the least of the Saints" (Ephes. iii. 8)—that is to say, of Christians, and "as one born out of due time" (1 Cor. xv. 8)? And is it not the unanimous saying of the Saints, while on this earth, that they are the greatest among sinners? Can we doubt their sincerity? Can we question the lights they received from God? But the Saints were humble; following Jesus, they had penetrated even to the depths of Christian abasement: it is there that, seeing God, they also saw themselves. They are clear-sighted; as for us, we are blind.

Finally, we owe you a last word on the humility that we are all bound to practise towards ourselves—that is to say, in the care we ought to take to acquire, to preserve, and to perfect in us this excellent virtue. Several things we have already said doubtless occur to us again in this part of our subject; but, seeing its importance, there is

reason for insisting on them, and, though at the risk of repetition, we do not wish to omit anything which refers to it. It is clear, in fact, that here is the foundation of all the other duties which the precept of humility lays upon us, and, consequently, there is nothing on this subject which ought more to preoccupy your conscience and to excite your zeal.

St. Thomas speaks of humility as a kind of first principle in the moral order; and this is true, whether we consider it as the specific remedy of pride, which is the most rooted, the gravest, and the most obstinate of our evils, or whether we look at it as the first condition of grace, which is itself the first condition of the virtues. "In the order of the virtues," says the holy Doctor, "humility holds the first rank—in this sense, that it drives from us pride, which places us in war with God; and that, on the contrary, it renders man submissive and entirely open to the effusions of Divine grace." * In this respect humility is justly called the foundation of our spiritual edifice. But it is such a foundation that, as we can establish nothing except upon it, nothing can be solidly raised without its aid, and without sharing its strength; so that it is the cement which binds and unites the stones, as well as the base which gives them its support. And this is why St. John Climachus writes, that as when the sun is eclipsed the whole earth is dark, so, if there is a want of humility, all our works are blighted, and nothing but blemish and corruption. †

* Humilitas primum venit in quantùm scilicet superbiam expellit cui Deus resistit, et præbet hominem subditum et patulum ad suscipiendum influxum gratiæ divinæ.—2da 2dæ, Quæst. clxi. art. 4, ad 2.

† Absente sole, omnia tenebris inhorrescunt; absente humilitate, omnia opera nostra marcescent et fœtent.—Scala. Grad. xxv.

What shall we say, then? Above all, apply yourself often, if not habitually, to that grave and difficult duty which is the consideration of yourself. Regard yourself attentively, seriously, begging God to grant that this look may be an irradiation and, as it were, a prolongation of His own, Whose watchful glance is ever on you, and Who is your infallible Judge. Regard yourself without timidity, without weakness, without flattery, without illusion, and even, as to what concerns appreciation properly so called, without indulgence. Look at yourself in the light of the present; look at yourself in the light of the past. If that frightens you, so much the better, since this fright is only the cry of a good conscience, and the sign of the grace in which you are now renewed. Since it is you who have committed these faults, and not another, and that the tree is known by its fruits, you would too soon forget what tree you once were, if you lose too soon the remembrance of your former life; and inasmuch, too, as the past, though all pardoned and detested as it is, has doubtless some effect still upon your present state; and as you have no assurance of not falling again from the state of grace in which you are, to that deplorable condition from which God has drawn you. Humble yourself, then, greatly in this way; and may this consciousness you entertain of your profound misery become, as it were, a settled axiom, in regulating all your interior life, and as the soil which yields all the harvest of your good works.

Discretion is, however, necessary in this matter as in every other. We have endeavoured to establish that the first and chiefest source of Christian humility is not the knowledge of oneself, but, much more, the knowledge of God, of His perfections, of His rights, and of His good-

ness. Do not fear, then, to leave sometimes, and I would willingly say to leave often, this consideration of yourselves for the consideration of God, especially of God in His relations with yourself.* We must take great care, in truth, when we humble, not to weaken the soul. A look on self, too frequent, too far-reaching, disposes one easily to sadness, and, more easily still, this sadness becomes that odious and dangerous discouragement whence spring distrust, the shutting up of the heart, fear, spiritual pusillanimity, cowardice, in a word, the giving up of labour and of duty, which are all so many pests to the soul, and obstacles to its progress. There is nothing worse than this. If a wise Director sees you in this state, rather than leave you in it, he ought to interdict you from voluntarily thinking of yourself, except during that brief interval in which he will allow you to examine your conscience for confession. On the contrary, he will oblige you to count the pledges of love that God has given you; to regard God Himself as washing away your stains, dressing your wounds, serving you in a thousand ways, enriching you, and pay-

* Many neither wish nor dare to think of and consider the graces that God has conferred on them in particular, for fear of the temptation to vain glory and self-complacency, in which certainly they are mistaken. For since, as the angelic Doctor observes, the true means of attaining to the love of God, is the consideration of His benefits (2da 2dæ, Quæst. xxvii. art. 3), the more we know them, the more we shall love Him. And as particular benefits move us more powerfully than general ones, so they ought to be considered more attentively. Certainly nothing can humble us so much before the mercy of God as the multitude of His benefits; nor can anything humble us so much before His justice as the multitude of our misdeeds.—S. Francis of Sales. Introd. to "Devout Life," Part 3rd, chap. 5.

ing joyously with His blood for the graces He deigns to grant you. Is all this less true than your miseries—I mean this sweet mercy of God? Let us contemplate what does not, rather than what does, pass away.

After this duty, performed with discretion, of the consideration of yourselves, be faithful to profit by all the occasions which present themselves of practising humility. Be humble, mild, and silent when you are blamed or corrected with reason. If you are blamed wrongfully, and that is imputed to you, of which you are not culpable, or, if your intentions are misinterpreted, keep yourself still more firm; because, the occasion being infinitely more precious, there is more probability that you may miss it from want of virtue. Keep silence, then, as Jesus did. Oh! eloquent and holy silence! And among so many examples that Our Lord has given us, how good is it for us to imitate Him in this! Some of the Saints had the courage to continue thus whole years without uttering a word, while under the lash of calumnious and truly infamous imputations! We read this of St. Vincent of Paul and St. Francis of Sales. Doubtless you will not sin in not raising yourself to this height. It may even happen that charity or prudence may oblige you to justify yourself; but by desire, at least, dispose yourself to keep silence, and only break it in the exact degree in which the glory of God does not require it to be kept.

Love what is poor, little, and simple. In the outward and human order of things, prefer what is least. Consider that labour, and even drudgery, is your lot, and take it as a real grace. Do not, for any reason whatever, put yourself forward, except to take upon yourself a charge which is painful and repulsive to others.

Speak little of yourself—I say, speak *little*: remark it

well. The resolution not to speak at all of oneself does not appear to be conformable to simplicity. It may often injure charity; it hinders that union which, being always useful in a community, is very requisite for certain persons.* Only, when you speak of yourself, do it with sobriety, with precaution, under the eye of God, and in a strict dependence on His Spirit. When a child on its road comes to a slippery place, it takes, and more firmly grasps, the hand of its mother. Do thus with God when you speak of yourself, and do not speak but for some good end, to glorify our Lord, to console your neighbour, to open his heart, to edify him, to show him your confidence and affection; or, again, for your own spiritual good, your consolation, your encouragement, your confirmation in the way of virtue. And, believe me, when you speak of yourself, although doubtless there may be more of evil than of good to mention, speak rather of the good than of the evil. We ought to have made great progress in virtue, in order to speak safely and with humility of what is evil in oneself.† The Saints have done it often: they will do it always. It is one of their imperious wants, and a sort of cry which relieves them; but it is also their privilege to do it so sincerely, with such an accent, and with so great an efficacy, that if they do not aways convince those to whom they speak thus, they seldom receive from them that agreeable correction and that charming contradiction which comes naturally from those who are charitable, or at least courteous, as

* "Humility which prejudices charity is undoubtedly false."—St. Francis de Sales, Introd. *Ibid.* We may say the same thing of that which wounds simplicity or lessens confidence.

† "I would not wish to speak evil of myself for fear of wishing to appear humble, and I am not so as yet."—Fr. Faber, Letter 57 to Fr. Newman, his "Life and Letters," vol. I.

the only answer which it is fitting to make to whoever humbles himself before them. If it happens that they receive this charming denial, it is always without having sought it, either directly or indirectly, and they take no pleasure in it. Now, I do not know why this sweet reparation is rarely, if ever, wanting to those who, without being established in humility, love to accuse themselves. The interest that their self-love receives from it, commonly exceeds by far the capital that their humility had risked. Certainly we do not mean to prohibit you from speaking occasionally of the evil that you think of yourself; but let it be truly grace which urges you to it, and do not make it your usual practice.*

Flee from praise; shun it if it pursues and overtakes you. Humility will very easily persuade you that it should be attributed to the kind-hearted charity, or to the humility, of those who give it. It will make you think immediately that if you were better known you would not be thus praised; or that, having some right to praise you in such and such circumstances, if they who do this knew your life and the bottom of your heart, they would rather despise you than give you their esteem. Humility will also interdict you, in these circumstances, from those denials, protestations, and signs of confusion in which many think they ought to abound. Humility will counsel you much rather to attach no importance to these praises, and to make others see that such is indeed

* "We very often say that we are nothing; that we are misery itself, and the filth of the world; but we should be very sorry if we were taken at our word, and that it should be bruited about that we are such. On the contrary, we pretend to flee and to hide ourselves, that people may run after us and seek us. True humility does not feign the appearance of humility, and hardly speaks its words."—St. Francis of Sales, Introd. *Ibid.*

the fact. Mild and kind to your neighbour who thinks so well of you, you will continue very simple in your behaviour, very retired in your opinions; and interiorly you will pass on, blessing God for the good opinion that is entertained of you; you will ask Him that this good opinion may be of service both to yourself and to others: to others by the edification they will draw from it, and the merit they will acquire; to yourself, by inspiring you with more zeal to render yourself truly worthy of this esteem, and of these commendations—in a word, and above all, you will give all the glory of it back to God.

Finally, love to live retired, hidden, and forgotten. According to "The Following of Christ," love to be unknown, and counted for nothing. God is hidden in the world; Jesus Christ lived hidden upon earth. Do as He did. Conceal yourself; disappear as much as you can. Do not think that edification suffers by this; for besides, that acts of virtue shed forth a lustre that cannot be concealed, and emit a perfume which cannot escape notice, nothing would edify your brethren more than to see you live only for God, retired in the "secret of His Face," with that exclusive pre-occupation to please Him which, St. Paul tells us, is the true mark of real virginity (1 Cor. vii. 32). With due reservation of what we have said above, in order to protect the rights of simplicity and charity, hide everything, but nothing so much as your humility. You must really be able to hide it from yourselves, and, by the help of grace, you will do so. Lose yourself in the crowd; do ordinary actions, although not in an ordinary way.

In a word, because in the work of our perfection it is never oneself who is the first and best workman, but truly God, our only Saviour and our great Sanctifier—to

these actions, to these efforts, to all the labour of humility, join patience to suffer the humiliations that come from without, and which God may send you; for it is written: "patience hath a perfect work" (St. James i. 4). Even with a very good will to ill-treat ourselves, we almost always spare ourselves. God alone knows where are the weak points in us. He knows how to reach them, either by Himself or by His creatures. This is one of those subtle entries of the Word into souls of which St. Paul says: "It is more piercing than any two-edged sword, reaching into the division of the soul and the spirit" (Heb. iv. 12)—that is to say, the sensible part of the soul, from its spiritual part. It is cruel, but inexpressibly salutary, and nothing so efficaciously makes humility grow in us.

This is true of accidental humiliations; it is true also of those that are habitual. We must place in the first rank of these humiliations those objections of which ascetics speak, and through which it pleases God to make some souls pass. The lives of the Saints are full of them. Such are, for example, certain hideous deformities, certain repulsive maladies, all sorts of services which are revolting, and which, evidently, are painful to one's neighbours: whence it comes that, however charitable and devoted our neighbour may be, his attention and his charity becomes a punishment to us as well as to him. We feel ourselves a burden to everybody; and it truly is so.

At other times all passes within. There are certain states when the soul seems to sink away, to become decomposed, to fall into ruin, and to vanish away, as it were, in smoke. Its powers become inactive; all the elasticity of life is gone; it is like a spiritual paralysis.

We feel that we are failing at the roots, that all our sap is dried up, and that we are falling back into our own nothingness. We have only one single feeling; but it seems to concentrate in it all the vivacity of those thoughts and sentiments that are gone: it is the feeling of a total annihilation; we may call it, the sensation of dying. On all other points but that of its powerlessness, often, also, of our unworthiness, we remain insensible. We believe that we have no more heart, that we are now and for ever incapable of all affection; and that even formerly, when we believed and we bore witness that we had one, we deceived ourselves, and lied to our brethren. Our remembrances are gone, our notions are all confused. We no longer understand what we read, nor what is said to us; our ideas escape us, expressions fail us, but never more unpitiably than when we converse with others. We think, however, our state more striking to others than it is in reality. But, whether well founded or not, our impressions remain with us, and it is only an aggravation to the humiliating burden which weighs us down. Must we attempt to relate the temptations of all kinds which very often rush upon us, and to which we are delivered as a prey, with a sort of conviction that we are absolutely alone, without any aid, Divine or human, without sympathy, and without defence? Add, that we become almost unable to discern if we consent to temptations, or even to separate temptation, from the movements of our own nature, and suggestions of Satan from our own personal inclinations. Then who will be able to describe what we think we have become in regard to our God? Is He still our own God? We dare not say, nor even think so. Here is the consummation! We affirm very sincerely that we are to God only an object—

not indeed of anger: *that* would humble and distress us much less—but of indifference, of weariness, of contempt, of disgust. And such is the state of ignominy to which we see ourselves reduced; such are the darkness and the mire which surrounds us, that we find God wise and just in treating us thus; which makes our misfortune appear to be without remedy, and our misery to be without end. What a sifting! what a crucible! what abjection! Indeed, there is no word sufficiently exact in which to describe this miserable state!

Happy, however, is that soul which is faithful to the grace which is given to it—then more than ever—and which sustains this terrible trial, and "remains with Jesus in all His tribulations" (St. Luke xxii. 28), and which, in truth, God "finds thus worthy of Himself" (Wisdom iii. 5). One hour of this agony, patiently and lovingly endured, is worth months, and perhaps years, of ordinary labour. Just as, after the shame and the pain of His Passion, Jesus dies, and is placed in the sepulchre, so this soul, Divinely trodden on and crushed, sees dead and buried within it, so far as its mortal condition allows, all that this earthly state had left in it of pride, of vanity, and of rooted opposition to God. This soul enters, as Jesus did, and, with Jesus risen, into a kind of superior state, which, though on one side it is earthly, is on the other heavenly—so much is it disengaged, free, tranquil, stable, and happy. The practice of humility has henceforth nothing in it of violence: hardly is it a labour. All in it becomes simple, united, voluntary, and silent. The soul is a pure, peaceable, and sweet efflorescence, like to that of the stems of plants which the sun in spring has come back to caress. It is, then, much more indifferent to praise than it is desirous of contempt. It desires only

to love God; and because it loves Him, it seeks only to annihilate itself before His Face, and to lose itself in His Bosom. The life of virtue abounds in it, even more than its practice. This soul is ripe in regard to humility, and, like all those who have reached this stage, it takes its repose. It has finished its week, and it has entered into its Sabbath of rest. It is a state full of joy; not that the joy is always fervent and jubilant, as in the time of its first spiritual youth, but it has the fulness of it, the calm and the vigour of its full growth. This soul walks always as carrying God; and it is the sentiment and the evidence of this intimate presence of God, which, while falling sweetly upon it, causes it to abase itself, and to overflow; and this holy overflow is the gift of the forgetfulness of itself. It thinks no longer of what it is; it does not regard itself, it does not count upon itself, and, consequently, it does not count upon persons or things. Love has become its only light, and, therefore, its only measure. God said to a holy soul: "My daughter, St. Vincent of Paul found love in humility; but you shall find humility in love."* Indeed here, at this height, these two virtues mingle with one another, and become one virtue, which has two names, because they have two aspects. The soul becomes no longer a centre: it is always a ray; or, if it is a centre, it does not know it, and does not wish to know it. It gravitates inviolably, and makes all gravitate with it towards its supreme centre, or, rather, towards its only centre—towards Jesus, Whom alone it loves, and to Whom it refers everything it has, and all that it is. It goes straight to what is in need, to what suffers, to what is

* The Mother Mary of Jesus, Du Bourg, foundress of the Congregation of the Sisters of our Saviour.

feeble, to what is little. It lives inclined to others; it lives for all; it lives a life given up, sacrificed, and devoted to God. It is, like the Holy Eucharist, the consummation of humility, because it is the consummation of love. Everything in it is a gift; and although He Who gives Himself to this soul is all things, He appears, nevertheless, to be nothing, and nothing of Himself appears in the soul, except that He gives to it Himself.